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JUDAISM

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CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

Franklin H. Littell

THREE AMERICAN JEWISH WRITERS

ABE CAHAN — Dan Vogel

SAUL BELLOW — Edward Alexander

ELIE WIESEL — Frederick Garber

POETRY, LOVE AND PRAYER

Edward K. Kaplan

PIONEERS IN JEWISH NATIONALISM

SHAY HURWITZ — Stanley Nash

A. D. GORDON — Roger E. Herst

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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American Jewish Congress

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JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a world-view on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

The First Reader

THE HOLOCAUST CONTINUES TO OCCUPY AN EVER more important role in twentieth-century Jewish life and thought. The extermination of six million men, women and children under the Nazis confronts the Jewish faith in God with its most agonizing problem in all history. It is, therefore, being discussed with ever greater seriousness by Jewish thinkers and scholars.

For Christianity, too, there is a major crisis of faith posed by the Holocaust. It resides in the abdication by the Church of the moral duty to denounce the monstrous evil of Nazism, without which its mission to proclaim righteousness and love becomes a mockery.

This moral crisis, by no means spent, has been recently underscored by the revelation of new evidence that the Pope was well aware of the Nazi mass murders, in the face of which he remained silent. The only difficulty is that this major moral problem of yesterday has been compounded by one of almost equal proportions today—the challenge of the Holocaust to Christianity has been ignored by all but a few Christian theologians. Only a chosen handful have recognized the face of evil incarnate behind the mask of Nazi Christianity, with its many living and still respectable incarnations in the world today. W. F. Albright and Reinhold Niebuhr of blessed memory, and A. Roy Eckardt and Franklin Littell among the living, come to mind as among the few great-souled Christians of the twentieth century who have sought to bring to their brothers a recognition of the massive guilt of Christianity in the Holocaust.

In his profoundly moving paper, "Christianity and Jews in the Historical Process," *Franklin H. Littell* speaks out with prophetic passion and unflinching integrity on the failure of organized Christianity to oppose *Deutschchristentum*, "German Christianity," during the heyday of Nazism, which lives on in various disguises in the Christian Church today. Littell pays tribute to the role of Evangelical Christianity in challenging the heresy of German Christianity that acquiesced in Nazi mass murder. The moral fervor of these true Christians is symbolized in the heroic figure of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who went to his death under the Nazis because he conspired to overthrow the Nazi regime.

Littell's dedication to righteousness and truth deserves equal candor and honesty. A comment, however painful, must, therefore, be added to his paper. He himself points out that Bonhoeffer was unable to get the "Faith and Order" meeting of the Protestant Churches meeting in Fano, Denmark to condemn the "German Christians" who were determined

to expunge the "Jewish element" from Christianity. And this was in 1934, long before Nazism had become all-powerful, even in Germany. Littell also cites a letter by the great theologian of the Church struggle, Karl Barth, who shortly before his death confessed his guilt in not recognizing that "the Jewish problem was the first and decisive question . . . , but there is no excuse that I did not fight properly for this cause, just because I was caught up in my affairs somewhere else." This confession of guilt does Barth great honor, but the fact remains that, like Pope Pius XII, he did not speak out when it was morally imperative to do so and when it might have had some effect on the course of events.

Dr. Littell pleads: "The Jewish people who have suffered so much at the hands of their own renegades can surely understand the laceration of the Church at the hand of its apostates." This is an appeal difficult to resist, yet it should be pointed out that the two phenomena are not parallel. Renegades in Judaism have been relatively few, and they did not determine either the character of the tradition or the course of its history. On the other hand, the apostates in the Church whom Littell has in mind have, unfortunately, been many and are probably still dominant, as he would surely admit.

If this painful observation is true, it suggests that the source of the infection may go deeper than heresy, and that what is called for is a rethinking of some of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, if it is to be true to its vision of God and man at its best.

The relatively high proportion of Jews among contemporary American writers has been acclaimed in some quarters and deprecated in others, but the fact itself is not subject to dispute. American Jewish writers fall into two categories, those whose Jewishness is purely accidental, or so they wish to believe, and those who find in their Jewish background the roots of their artistic being, which serves them richly in their creative activity.

The first significant novel treating American Jewish life with maturity and sophistication was *The Rise of David Levinsky* by Abe Cahan, the redoubtable Editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward* in the days of its greatest influence and power. In "Cahan's 'Rise of David Levinsky': Archetype of American Jewish Fiction," *Dan Vogel* presents a critical study of this early masterpiece of American-Jewish letters, which caught the temper and the tempo of the Russian Jewish immigrants to the United States at the beginning of this century.

In our day, no sensitive writer or thinker can ignore the Holocaust, which bestrides the contemporary Jewish consciousness like a tragic Colossus. Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* contains what is perhaps the most deeply felt evocation of this horror by any American-Jewish writer

who has not made it a central pre-occupation. *Edward Alexander* offers a critical analysis in his paper, "Imagining the Holocaust."

The most gifted and eloquent voice crying out from the void of the Nazi campaign of annihilation is *Elie Wiesel*. His artistic achievement is the subject of *Frederick Garber's* "The Art of Elie Wiesel."

It is noteworthy that *Abe Cahan*, *Saul Bellow* and *Elie Wiesel* represent a crescendo vis-à-vis their Jewish heritage, from minimal involvement, to growing preoccupation, to total commitment.

If it is true that the only true religion is personal religion, *Edward K. Kaplan's* essay, "Three Dimensions of Human Fullness: Poetry, Love and Prayer" is a highly significant contribution to the understanding of the nature of religious experience. Even more important, its deeply moving personal character makes it a testament of the quest for faith and, by that token, a stimulus to religious experience on the part of the reader.

Those who are born before their time are often doubly punished—they have limited influence with their contemporaries and are forgotten by later generations. Instances of this melancholy truth are legion. One thinks of *Moses Hess*, who published his "Rome and Jerusalem" in 1862 and whose attempted synthesis of religious tradition, nationalism, and social justice remained abortive for decades. Another illustration is afforded by the brilliant, controversial Hebrew writer, *Shay Hurwitz*, whose intellectual originality and abrasive honesty made him controversial in his own day and all-but-forgotten in ours. In his paper, "Shay Hurwitz, A Pioneering Polemicist for Truth," the author, *Stanley Nash*, highlights the many striking elements in Hurwitz's thoughts which made him an intellectual precursor of movements that have come to fruition only in our day. By that token, the relevance of his thought in many areas may lead modern readers to his writings, which, incidentally, are couched in a vivid and engaging style.

As great historical figures recede into the background, adulation tends to be replaced by analysis. *Aaron David Gordon*, the philosopher of "The Torah of labor," who saw in physical work, particularly on the soil, the great regenerative principle of life for man in general and for the Jew in particular, has been regarded as an apostle of socialist Zionism. In his paper "A. D. Gordon: On Social Nationalism," *Roger Herst* finds a deep-seated conflict between Gordon's socialism and his Jewish nationalism, and concludes that the latter triumphed over the former.

One of the most colorful personalities in recent Israeli life was Moshe Sneh, whose career included leadership in Mapai, the moderate social democratic governing group, in Mapam, the left-wing in the labor movement, and the tiny Communist party in Israel. Nevertheless, Sneh left instructions that his burial be carried out in conformity with strict traditional law. The tensions and contradictions in his personality are examined by *David J. Schnall* in his paper, "Dialectical Zionism."

Panegyrics on the Sabbath are no novelty. Its universal significance was highlighted by the world famous medical authority, Sir William Osler, when he declared that the Sabbath is the greatest Jewish contribution to civilization. The significance of the Sabbath for Jewish survival was indicated by the Hebrew philosopher and essayist, Ahad Ha'am, in his judgment that "more than Israel has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept Israel." Nevertheless, the full implications of the Sabbath for the Jewish world-view have not been sufficiently recognized.

In his paper, "The Extended Notion of the Sabbath," *Saul J. Berman* explores the impact of the Sabbath on basic aspects of Jewish religion and ethics.

R. G.

Christians and Jews in the Historical Process

FRANKLIN H. LITTELL

THE QUESTION UNDER DISCUSSION IS THIS: "HAVE Christians and Jews a Common Future?"

Forty years ago, if we were alert to our own crystal moment (*kairos*), we would be dealing with the same question in a different form: "Have Christians and Jews a Common Past?" Past, present or future—the critical matter is whether the Christian church and the Jewish people are purely incidental to each other, except for occasional shared felicities or calamities, or whether in some mysterious way they are locked in a unique relationship which neither can break without peril to its soul. To the Jews: are the Christians simply one of many sectors of the gentile world, except that propinquity has frequently brought suffering and death to the elder brother? Is Christianity, at best, only another "religion," like Buddhism or Hinduism, equally valid options for non-Jews—who must look to the Noachite rule for any hope of salvation, but never count Abraham as their father? On relation to Christians, Dr. Nahum Goldmann (World Jewish Congress) said at the London Conference: "We are seeking good relations because we are living in the same world together—for Judaism, Christianity is marginal." To the Christians: are the Jews simply another of the many tribes of the earth, like the Bavarians or the Huron Indians, whose continued existence is subject to nature's law but no extra-human power? Is the restoration of Israel of the same order as the nationhood of—say—Ghana or Cyprus, satisfactorily covered by the rubric, "the self-determination of peoples"?

Forty years ago, to repeat, the question of our common past was raised in sharpest form by the assault of the *Deutsche Christen* upon the traditional Christian claim to appropriate the Jewish heritage and to treat as the inspired word of God those portions of the Jewish Scriptures which they called the Old Testament. The *Deutsche Christen*, the first tool of the Nazis to soften up the Evangelical Church and to muffle any residual tendency of German Protestants to think and act as a counter-culture, managed to capture the major church offices in all states but Hanover, Württemberg and Bavaria, and to popularize a "Christian-

This paper was delivered at the Van Leer Foundation in Jerusalem, February 14, 1973, under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee, the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, and the Israel Interfaith Committee.

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ity" purged of its essential Jewishness. We may profit by recollecting some of the language they used:

In the person of the Führer we behold the messenger sent by God, who brings Germany into the presence of the God of history . . .

There is then only one option: the visible church . . . to be filled with the National Socialist spirit . . .

We *Deutsche Christen* are the inner line of National Socialism . . . To live, fight and die for Adolf Hitler means to say 'Yes' to the way of Christ.

The German hour (of destiny), in which we are commanded to take our places, is an epochal hour for the world, in which the last and deepest questions will be put anew. With reference to the traditional (*überlieferte*) religion of the German people, which must give evidence today of its life-value and life force, the question is indicated: in what relationship does it stand to the enemy of German life and renewal of the West, to *Judentum*.¹

The *Deutsche Christen* leaned very heavily upon the great liberal scholars who had made the critical studies of Jewish folklore and fable and compared them with Scandinavian sagas, Teutonic epics, and other ethnic treasures. Most of them had rejected the obscure and the mysterious and the particular in religion; many of them had drawn a line between the harsh way of the God of the Old Testament and the neighborly precepts of the friendly Lord of the New; an astonishing number had joined the Institute for the Study and Elimination of Jewish Influence upon German Church Life, founded after the Godesberg Declaration of March 1939.

None of their pamphleteers put the enlightened point of view more clearly than Friedrich Murawski in his attack on the Confessing Church (BK):

All theologians, as far as they think in a scholarly fashion, are in agreement concerning all these things. This means from a *theological standpoint* one cannot distinguish between the Jewish legends and any others. Whereby the question is raised again: If they are *only* legends—why then Jewish ones of all things?

When the influential *teachers of the church* reject in their scholarly *publications* the entirety of the "historical" Bible as mere fiction, when they do not even stop at the founders of the church, when they prove wrong the central points of church life, when, according to their presentation, the Bible has absolutely no more meaning than a book of fairy tales—should not a German of the twentieth century once and for all renounce both *for himself and his children* the myths of the Near East and the Jewish church, in order to choose instead *his own* myth which is an outgrowth of *his own* blood, *his own* worldview, *his own* life style: the myth of the twentieth century?²

1. Kurt Meier, *Die Deutschen Christen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 8, 62, 194.

2. Friedrich Murawski, *Die politische Kirche und ihre biblischen "Urkunden"* (Berlin: Theodor Fritsch Verlag, 1938), pp. 18, 95.

What could be more enlightened and consistent than that? The men of the Barmen Declaration (1934) were simply rebuked for "meddling in politics" in rejecting Nazism, and condemned as "fundamentalists" because they affirmed the authority of the Bible.

This kind of thinking is well known, and it has been dominant in many educated circles since the Enlightenment. In this pattern of thought, each people has its own ethnic genius, and its traditions and writings are equal to any and all others. The Ten Commandments given at Sinai are best understood by reference to the Code of Hamurabi, if not the annals of Confucius. The Exodus is but one of many folk-wanderings remembered in oral tradition or recorded in writing at a later (and, therefore, suspect) date. What the Christians claim happened at Golgotha can only remind one of Socrates drinking the hemlock and Jeanne d'Arc burned at the stake. This is the early method of the "hard" sciences, and it is often applied to studies of human affairs and religious truth—where, not seldom, it works violence unless balanced by other lines of approach. The process of abstraction is familiar, and . . . it renders essentially meaningless the most critical and unique events of our common past.

By such means, unless the critical and comparative method is dialectically balanced by poetic sensitivity or by a sense of the tragic (if not by faith), mountain peaks like the offering of Isaac, the Red Sea, Sinai, Bethel are ground up into tiny particles and scattered across a flat desert without living water, where no life can find sustenance. And, by the same intellectual method today, the Holocaust becomes for some only a banality, another—and somewhat exaggerated—demonstration of "man's inhumanity to man."

The *Deutsche Christen* did not hate the Jews and Jewishness because of devotion to universalism. Nor did they attack what they considered the malevolent influence of *Judentum* upon "the German tradition of heroic piety," because of antipathy to some general Jewish principle called "ethical monotheism." Their hate (and envy) arose against Jewish peoplehood, Jewish particularism. They could not grasp the peculiar dialectic of particularism and universalism which is the way the Scriptures, both Jewish and Christian, describe God's work in human history.³ One of the first projects of the *Deutsche Christen's* Institute previously mentioned was to issue a special edition of the Four Gospels free of Jewish influence "*dass aus Liturgie und Liedgut die Zionismen verschwinden.*"⁴ As you can see, "Zionism" was already more concrete and earthy

3. Nor can American liberal Protestants; cf. a purported study of anti-Semitism which serves notice that American Jews must choose between Israel and America, between an old-fashioned anthropomorphic deity and a supra-sectarian spirituality grounded in the souls of man—Fred G. Bratton, *The Crime of Christendom* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), esp. Ch. XII..

4. Meier, *Op. cit.*, p. 292.

than “Judaism,” and it was already a code-word used by anti-Semites . . .

Again, the basic problem of the *Deutsche Christen* was their inability to think dialectically about particularism and universalism. They were not bothered by the particularism of a Christian church, because they had settled for a culture-religion (*Kulturprotestantismus*): a corrupted and compromised form of Christianity which blended, without difficulty, with the values and norms of Germanic peoplehood. Since they did not understand that the Christian church, when it knows itself, is also a counter-culture in inevitable conflict with the spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*), they had no way of understanding and appreciating the Jewish people as a counter-culture. Their anti-Semitism, in short, was an inevitable component of their faithlessness as Christians. They no longer knew what a church was as a counter-culture; even less could they appreciate a Jewish “peculiar people.”

Professor Cajus Fabricius of the University of Berlin wrote one of the ablest defences of *Positives Christentum*—the “non-sectarian religion” professed in Article 24 for the NSDAP program (1920). His little book shows how far, for these hyphenated Christians, the Nazi *Volks-gemeinschaft*—which Hitler said would be his greatest contribution to German history—had replaced the church as the spiritual community of first loyalty.

We Germans of German type are at the same time Christians, and as Christians are at the same time Germans of German type. Hence, to us, Christianity means no eradication of folk-characteristics, but rather an experiencing of the supreme Divine Power behind the outward wrappings that go to make up our racial characteristics.

Within this world our German *Volk* is a part of the Aryan race; German blood courses through our veins, and we live on German soil. We love this *Volk* with all the surrender we are capable of, and we love precisely this people of ours today, raised as it has been from out the depths of direct need by an overwhelming act of Divine Providence. And in this great happening we look upon the fact that the Führer, Adolf Hitler, has been given to us as a very special mark of God’s mercy towards us. We shall never be weary of thanking God for this special ordering of our history in the great happenings of the world.⁵

A group of German Lutherans meeting in synod at Ansbach rejected the Barmen Declaration (of May, 1934) of the Christian resistance and re-affirmed their identity with the Teutonic tribe in these words:

. . . The unchangeable will of God meets us in the total reality of our life as it is illumined by God’s revelation. It binds everyone . . . to the natural orders to which we are subject, such as family, nation, race . . . In this knowledge we thank God the Lord that he has given to our people in its need a leader (Hitler) as “a pious and faithful sovereign.”⁶

5. Cajus Fabricius, *Positive Christianity in the Third Reich* (Dresden: Püschel, 1937), pp. 44–46.

6. Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Church’s Confession Under Hitler* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 182.

To all this inflated language and heathen spirituality (*Geistigkeit*) one of the great Christian resisters replied:

The Evangelical Church has to start every discussion with the avowal that its doctrine is a permanent affront to the morality and ethical feeling of the German race.⁷

The kind of liberal anti-Semitism represented by the *Deutsche Christen* fell out of style in Germany after the collapse of the Third Reich. At least in the formal sense, the path of the Confessing Church and its Intact Church allies has won a general accreditation. But in America, where general discussion of the meaning of the Church Struggle and the Holocaust has begun to involve Jewish and Christian teachers only in the last five years, the characteristic teachings of the *Deutsche Christen* are still a commonplace in the religious press. Probably the most consistent journal in this respect is the *United Church of Canada Observer*, edited by A. C. Forrest, which also publishes articles and editorials of a more crassly anti-Semitic type. Hertzfel Fishman, in a book soon to be published by the Wayne State University Press,⁸ has reviewed hundreds of editorials and articles in *The Christian Century*, *Christianity and Crisis* and other leading liberal journals. As Fishman shows, again and again the Jews are attacked because they refuse to assimilate and disappear, because they threaten American national identity with their stubborn tenacity as a counter-culture. A few selections should suffice to make the basic point—

Can democracy suffer a hereditary minority to perpetuate itself as a permanent minority with its own distinctive culture, sanctioned by its own distinctive cult forms? They have no right in a democracy to remove their faith from the normal influence of the democratic process by insulating it behind the walls of a racial and cultural solidarity . . . (Charles Clayton Morrison in *Christian Century*, 9 June 1937, p. 735).

Many of our Jewish fellow-citizens will gain for themselves the suspicion of being hyphenates . . . (Henry Sloane Coffin in *Christianity and Crisis*, answered by A. Roy Eckardt and others, 21 March 1949, pp. 30f).

Reinhold Niebuhr, my own teacher, was the strongest single voice on the other side, just as he was the most voluminous and dependable American interpreter of the German church struggle. Niebuhr attacked the source of the error, criticizing the liberal anti-Semites' false view of religious universalism. He also attacked their dogma's "implicitly making

7. Quoted in "*Kirchliche Zeitlage*," in Joachim Beckmann, ed., *Kirchliches Jahrbuch: 1938–1944* (Gütersloh: G. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1948), p. 3. The Sasse statement paraphrases, ironically, a line in Art. 24 of the NSDAP Program: "We demand liberty for all religious denominations in the State, so far as they are no danger to it and do not militate against the morality and moral sense of the German race . . ." (italics mine).

8. Hertzfel Fishman, *American Protestantism and the Jewish State, 1937–67* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973). I am obligated to Dr. Fishman for the parenthetical citations.

collective extinction the price of its provisional tolerance" (*The Nation*, 21 February 1942, p. 215).

The Christian Century bitterly attacked Stephen S. Wise when he tried to awaken America to the facts of the Death Camps.⁹ Its editor, Charles Clayton Morrison, then went on to compound his own complicity in Nazi genocide by opposing even emergency visas for 100,000 refugees: "Our immigration laws should be maintained and even strengthened . . ." (*Christian Century*, 30 November, 1938, pp. 1456–58). The situation today is improved with *The Christian Century*, but worsened with *Christianity and Crisis*. In fact, the editor of the latter journal has conducted himself so unfairly toward the Jews and Israel that Dr. Ursula Niebuhr, widow of the great theologian and, like him, a friend of Israel, last spring removed his name from the masthead of the journal which Professor Niebuhr had founded.

Religion and Life, a liberal Methodist quarterly, has recently published an outrageous attack on Jewish particularism, in which the Jews are even called "subversives" and "saboteurs" for failing to assimilate in ancient Egypt and Babylon, and Hitler is understandingly treated:

It is not surprising that Hitler retaliated against the chosen race by decreeing that it was not the Jewish but the Arian (*sic!*) race that was chosen.¹⁰

As for the Sunday School lessons, perhaps the most influential church publications of all, a recent study of over 3,000 units covering nine years and twelve denominations—a study sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the National Conference of Christians and Jews—shows that the Holocaust and the restoration of Israel, the two epochal events in centuries of Jewish and Christian history, are mentioned in only 4 lessons and 15 lessons, respectively.¹¹ The rest of the lessons simply continue to turn the crank on the ancient lies against the Jews—including the defamation of the Pharisees, the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews, the condemnation of the Jews to wandering and disappearance, and the like.

It was against this background of unrepentant and unreformed theological and cultural anti-Semitism that, with some colleagues, I founded "Christians Concerned for Israel." We were agonized by what Professor Roy Eckardt called the "thunderous silence" of the churches at the time of the Six Day War, which was followed on 7 July, 1967 by a statement of the General Board of the National Council of Churches which managed to roam the whole Middle East question without once mentioning

9. Carl Hermann Voss, *Servant of the People* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), pp. 255–56.

10. George Wesley Buchanan, "Jewish and Christian Relationships," *Religion in Life* (Summer, 1971), p. 279.

11. Gerald S. Strober, *Portrait of the Elder Brother* (New York: AJC/NCCJ, 1972), p. 37f.

the Russian involvement or the Arab League's genocidal declarations of intent. Most of all, we were convinced, and still are, that until the Christians face the meaning for Christianity of the Church Struggle, the Holocaust and a restored Israel, very little they have to say on other matters will carry credibility.

* * *

The flight from history which the apostate Christians took during the Third Reich was charted by their anti-Semitism. And it is precisely because of the desperate need to recover a sense of history that the Christians need the Jews. Roy Eckardt put it strongly—and truthfully—one time, when he commented that the worst thing that could happen to the Christian church would be to have to live and work in a world without Jews. The attempt to do so, whether by denying the Jewish component in Christianity (Marcionite heresy) or by acquiescing in Nazi genocide, has been the most fertile source of the present malaise in Christendom and in Christian theology.

In a volume edited by Professor Moshe Davis of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, two brilliant essays by two different academic leaders in two different vernaculars and disciplines come to this same truth. The great archaeologist, William F. Albright, compares the restoration of Israel with that which followed the Return from Exile twenty-five centuries ago, commenting also that many scholars are unfitted to comprehend and appreciate such utterly unique events and, therefore, depreciate their importance. In Professor Albright's view, the reason for this blindness is that—especially in America—"we have not yet really suffered from the crisis of our age." Carl J. Friedrich, political scientist at Harvard, deals with the importance of the Jews to Western civilization as carriers of the sense of history—a quality lacking in Hellenism. "For the sense of history is . . . built upon a realization that the events of history are unique . . ." ¹² The Jews are the people who both carry history and impart the sense of history to others by their presence.

Speaking perhaps too boldly, my own argument is the precise opposite of that of Samson Raphael Hirsch, described in a recent work by Professor Rotenstreich:

The Jews, as Hirsch viewed them, were exempt from the historical process because the religious truth imparted to them anteceded that process.

. . . the Jews dwell outside the stream of history and the others within it. ¹³

12. Moshe Davis, ed., *Israel: Its Role in Civilization* (New York: Harper & Bros. for Jewish Theological Seminary, 1956); William F. Albright, "Israel—Prophetic Vision and Historical Fulfillment," p. 35; Carl J. Friedrich, "Israel and the End of History," p. 96.

13. Nathan Rotenstreich, *Tradition and Reality* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 112.

My argument is that the Jewish people carries history, that the believing gentiles are grafted into that history through Jesus, and that when the baptized gentiles go bad—as they have, in large numbers, in the 20th century—political and genocidal anti-Semitism is the first and most dependable indicator of their flight from history. It is true that the historical process begins with the covenant of God with Abraham (Gen. 15:7, 12:1), and was confirmed in the Exodus, but neither the Jewish people nor those who have interacted with them and, in some mysterious way, are locked in with them, can find a motionless point outside the turmoils and sufferings of human history. If they have found such a point, in one age or another, it has turned out to be the eye of the storm . . .

Eric Voegelin, in a brilliant refutation of Toynbee—who had his own ideological scheme for bracketing the Jewish people out of continuing history, wrote against Toynbee and Spengler and their misuse of analogies from nature:

Neither of the two thinkers has accepted the principle that experiences of order, as well as their symbolic expressions, are not products of a civilization but its constitutive forms. They still live in the intellectual climate in which “religious founders” were busy with founding “religions,” while in fact they were concerned with the ordering of human souls and, if successful, founded communities of men who live under the order discovered as true.¹⁴

Toynbee’s famous *Study of History* was, in truth, a non-history, a multitude of discrete details mounted upon a typical structure of enlightened abstraction, as his inability to deal evidentially—or even fairly—with the Jews makes clear.¹⁵ As Voegelin, who has written brilliantly elsewhere on modern gnostic systems, puts it—

If we follow Toynbee, we have in our hands (1) an Israel whose history begins only after the conquest of Canaan, (2) a line of spiritual enlightenment from *jinn* to Jesus, (3) a Babylonian Abraham, and (4) an Egyptian Moses. And when we look at this odd assortment, we begin to wonder what has become of the Israel whose history is preserved in the Old Testament?¹⁶

History, as Voegelin goes on to present it, and as the people that carries history experiences it, is the *Exodus from civilizations*.¹⁷

Behold a people dwelling alone, that is not numbered among the nations (Num. 23:9)! The inability of the post-Enlightenment mind to deal with uniqueness, with particularity, with events of the earthy, is the

14. Eric C. Voegelin, *Order and History, I: Israel and Revelation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), p. 125.

15. Toynbee on the Jews: “fossilized relics of societies now extinct”; *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937–), I, 35, 51; III, 49; V, 7. One gathers that the predictable practical anti-Semitism of the Toynbees, father and son, derives in part from the Jews’ refusal to stay fossilized as the Toynbee ideological scheme requires.

16. Voegelin, *Op. cit.*, p. 120.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

fertile source of anti-Semitism among intellectuals and liberal Protestants. It is also, and at the same time, the beginning of the flight from history: the dialogue with the past is neglected, the present moment of decision is generalized and neutered, and the hope of things to come is buried in a slagpile of relativities, moral desperation, and longings without outline.

* * *

Elsewhere, I shall deal more fully with the significance of unique and formative events in our common history. At the level of personal history we get the point immediately, for a healthy person measures his life—not in abstractions—but in meaningful relationships and events; only the alienated live a personal history surrounded by apparitions, cloudy spirits, propositions, ideological categories. In general history, however, foot-faulting is common in times of turmoil. Nowhere is this more dangerous than when we try to find a new way in Christian-Jewish relations, a path through a field full of land-mines easily exploded if we remember dogmas and forget human persons.

Let me give an example of the way that the interpretation of events in our recent history can divide even men graced by both scientific acumen and good will. The question of the real meaning of the German Church Struggle, its mythical and mysterious dimension, is vital for our future. In one of several excellent papers on the *Kirchenkampf*, Professor Klaus Scholder, head of the *Institut zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes* at Tübingen, defines the basic message in this way:

However variously the results of the twelve years of church history from 1933 to 1945 may be judged and will be judged, on one point there is general agreement: the core of the church struggle, its decisive lesson, was the winning again of "Solus Christus."

It seems to me beyond question that the most important theological fruit of the church struggle is the insight into the absolutely central aspect of Christology for all theology.¹⁸

Professor Scholder may well be right about the path of the Confessing Church from the Barmen Synod of May, 1934 through the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt of October, 1945. Certainly he perceives truly and feels deeply the importance of the Barmen rejection of the claims of the Nazi state to intervene and control the work and service of the church, where Christ alone is Lord. And he celebrates the meaningfulness of the Stuttgart word:

We have in truth for long years fought in the name of Jesus Christ against the spirit which found its frightful expression in the Nazi rule of force, but we accuse ourselves that we did not confess our faith more boldly, pray more faithfully, believe more joyfully, and love more ardently.¹⁹

18. Klaus Scholder, "*Die Ergebnisse des Kirchenkampfes und die theologische Situation der Gegenwart*," *Tüztzinger Texte*, Sonderband I (1969), pp. 260, 264.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

And yet . . . and yet: even at Stuttgart there is no mention of the most central betrayal of the Lord of the Church, of the fundamental apostasy of the Christians. That core of the Christian tragedy was not that a key theological concept—even *the* key theological concept—was twisted and surrendered to the enemy. That central betrayal was an act of rebellion against God, planned and carried out by baptized Christians: the murder of six million Jews. It is this hard historical fact that raises for sensitive Christians, like an earthquake felt in the darkness, the question of the credibility of Christianity. Was Jesus a False Messiah—not for what he taught, but for the faithlessness of those who profess his name?

Shortly before his death, Karl Barth—the great theologian of the Church Struggle—wrote to Eberhard Bethge, the friend, editor, and biographer of the martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45). Barth had just read Bethge's biography, fresh from the press in Munich.

New to me (in your biography) was the fact that Bonhoeffer in 1933 viewed the Jewish problem as the first and decisive question, even as the only one, and took it in hand so energetically. I have long felt guilt myself that I did not make this problem central, in any case not in public, for instance in the two Barmen declarations of 1934 which I had composed. Certainly, a text in which I inserted a word to that effect would not have found agreement in 1934—considering the state of mind even of the confessors of faith in those days; nor in the Reformed synod of January 1934; nor in the General Synod of May at Barmen. But there is no excuse that I did not fight properly for this cause, just because I was caught up in my affairs somewhere else.²⁰

And Wilhelm Niemöller, archivist and historian of the German Church Struggle, like Barth nearly eighty years old, and with much in his life and writings at stake, in the same season opened an article on the question, "*Ist die Judenfrage 'bewältigt'?*":

It has become evident that the Jewish question was the actual central issue of the Church Struggle. But when we ask about the resistance which was achieved in this matter in the Evangelical Church, then we come to a meager return.²¹

We are not dealing here with what happens (*das Geschehende*), but with what it tells (*das Erzählende*). And what it tells depends upon the question we put to it. And the question we put in our dialogue with the past reveals who we are and where we are, i.e., what we are doing with our present. If the first question put, and the primary lesson learned from the Church Struggle is the question of Christology, we have not moved much beyond the Council of Chalcedon (451). It is true, of course, that Marcion (fl. 140–60) was a heretic, and so were the *Deutsche Christen*, who sought in the days of the Third Reich to eliminate the essen-

20. Quoted by Bethge in *XXVIII Evangelische Theologie* (1968) 10:555.

21. Wilhelm Niemöller, "*Ist die Judenfrage 'bewältigt'?*" *Junge Kirche* (May, 1968), suppl. #2, p. 2.

tial Jewishness of Christianity. The essential point is the event and what it means: when Dietrich Bonhoeffer tried to get the Faith and Order meeting at Fanø (Denmark) in 1934 to condemn the Marcionite *Deutsche Christen* with their revival of an ancient heresy, the action was refused. The church, which through centuries of teaching theological and cultural anti-Semitism had created a high wall between Christians and Jews, showed very little regard for "boundary maintenance" when it came to Aryan heresies and pseudo-Christian cults. The churchmen were unable to deal with heresy of the most common garden variety. How, then, would they handle the unique and extremely difficult internal crisis of the church in the 20th century—the incidence of wholesale apostasy?

The simplistic reading of the record still prevails: the Nazis were neo-pagans, the church was persecuted. There is an element of truth in this portrayal: Mathilde Ludendorff and Darré and Rosenberg were, indeed, pagans, and that small minority of Evangelical and Catholic confessors and martyrs who stayed faithful was, indeed, persecuted. But the effort to portray the time and trial and testing in the language of "paganism," "heresy," and "persecution" reflects the psychological drive to formulate the crisis in terms of old and mastered problems. The church has for a long time understood the historical meaning of paganism, heresy, martyrdom—even though the lessons may be forgotten in traumatic moments of decision.

The mysterious, the awful, the yet-unmastered meaning of the time of the Church Struggle and Holocaust goes much deeper. The problem of Christianity in the 20th century is not heresy but apostasy, not persecution but the rebellion of millions of the baptized against God. Adolf Hitler died a Roman Catholic, and an annual Mass is still celebrated for him in Madrid. Hermann Goering said, during the trial of major war criminals at Nürnberg—

I myself am not what you might call a churchgoer, but I have gone now and then, and have always considered I belonged to the Church and have always had those functions over which the Church presides—marriage, christening, burial, et cetera—carried out in my house by the Church.²²

At this juncture, the critical point is that Goering, a Lutheran, was never denied the offices of his church.

The thousand years of the Third Reich lasted twelve years, the last two years fatal for European Jewry. The first important diplomatic coup that Hitler scored was a Concordat with a section of the Christian church. And during all those murderous years neither he nor any of his fellow-criminals was called to account by either of the churches to which they belonged. Dr. Ringelblum, in his journal of the Warsaw ghetto, has recorded the arrogant statement of a German policeman: "You, Jew, you

22. *Trial of the Major War Criminals* (Nürnberg: International Military Tribunal, 1947), vol. IX, p. 268.

have lost the 20th century!" (*Sie, Jude, Sie haben das zwanzigste Jahrhundert verloren!*)²³ By a miracle, the Jews have not lost this century nor the next. But can the same be said with certainty of the Christians?

Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography* related—like the letters and other records of so many of the finest leaders of the new Asia—how the First World War destroyed his illusions about the appeal of Christianity and the exemplary worth of Christian nations. What will happen when the story of the Holocaust and Christendom's role in it begins to penetrate the minds, not only of the peoples divesting themselves of colonialism, but of our own youth as well? And especially so, if we are still telling the old lies about the Jews, and have not repented and purged our souls of the sin of theological and cultural anti-Semitism which made the ideological weapon of political anti-Semitism possible and genocide a reality?

As we reflect again and again upon the past, and relive its experiences and encounters, a myth is created. This myth has its own power to shape events: it is believed, because it carries the truth of an experience. It makes a great difference whether, in wrestling with the mythical import of those fateful years, we Christians interpret the crisis in a language which is internal and esoteric or in a language which brings out that dimension which is common to Christians and Jews. The Jewish people, who have suffered so much at the hands of their own renegades, can surely understand the laceration of the church at the hands of its apostates. But that Jews will find much in common with a Christian effort to reduce the crisis to a more or less classical discussion of heresy, persecution and sound Christology, I greatly doubt.

Those Jews who suffered and died in Hitler's Europe perished for what the Christians would have suffered for *had they remained Christians*: the truth that the initiative, the direction, and the judgment of history lies in the hands of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jew was recognized by the Adversary, the enemy of humanity, even when he did not (personally) understand himself, as a sign of the Holy One of Israel. The Christian, who had been grafted into that history by virtue of his baptism, could take on again the protective coloration of heathen ethnicity, could betray his baptism and retreat into non-history, could become an apostate and betrayer. And millions did so, leaving the Jews of the first covenant and a few faithful Christians of the second covenant exposed to the wrath and destruction of the demonic power in whose countenance (*prosopon*) confessors like Barth and Bonhoeffer recognized the outlines of the Anti-Christ. And Bonhoeffer, too, understood the nature of the intellectual corruption which had turned the baptized back toward heathenism:

23. *The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. and transl. by Jacob Sloan (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1958), p. 129.

The docetic heresy is the typical heresy of Greek thought. It is pagan thought *par excellence*. It has one opponent: Jewish thought.²⁴

It was Bonhoeffer, too, who insisted on the importance of the Old Testament: "I don't think it is Christian to want to get to the New Testament too soon and too directly."²⁵ As Bonhoeffer understood very well, without that past which is common to Christians and Jews, the Christians have no history at all—and, therefore, no future.

For the Christian, the agony of the religious crisis is the inescapable record that while the church—right up to many of its highest officers—ran away in the hour of her visitation, the Jewish people bore the burden of being witnesses in the flesh to the Truth which both peoples have professed with their lips. And now the voice of our brother's blood cries out to God from the ground . . . (Gen. 4:10)

* * *

Unless the Jews and the Christians have a common future, the Christians have no future at all—just as the Christians have no past without their share in the promises. Of course, without the relationship to the Jewish people, some gnostic cults might survive for a time, with a false front of Christian words and symbols; but, like the Magdeburg spheres, the outside pressures would only be balanced by the vacuum within.

For the carriers of history, it is the view of the future that unlocks the meaning of history. For the Christians, the needed healing can come only through a return to the rock from whence we were hewn (Isa. 51:1). In the covenant, the hope of the future is not without form and void, like the world before creation began, but clear enough in ethical and personal import. It is an open secret that the churches are confused, rudderless, and tilting from enthusiasm to enthusiasm—civil rights, peace, racial justice, women's liberation, and now, the "Third World"—without a secure sense of direction or purpose or awareness of time and place. When something noble is attempted, like the Second Vatican Council, half a decade later we are found in headlong flight—overcome by vertigo, as it were, by the climb halfway to the top. (And in the Declaration on the Jews Vatican II got just about halfway to the top!) When something ignoble occurs, as recently perpetrated by terrorists in Bangkok, a few days later a top ecclesiastic executive makes a public statement which, in that time and place, can only be described as obscene.²⁶

24. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 79.

25. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Prisoner for God: Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 79.

26. According to a 5 January 1973 release by the Associated Press, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Phillip Potter, on the previous day endorsed the objectives of "nearly one million Palestinian refugees" and condemned the anti-terrorist resolution which failed—due to Arab League and Communist blocs—in the United Nations. The statement was issued in Bangkok a few days after the latest terrorist violence!

Toward the end of the 51st chapter of Isaiah, recently cited, there are verses which well apply to the present condition of the Christians:

Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people. Behold I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again!

But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee, which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over. (Isa. 51:22-23)

The "cup of trembling" which a generation ago was held in the hands of European Jewry now rests squarely in the hands of the Christian churches. The Jewish people, whose future seemed so bleak in the season of the crucifixion in Death Camps, has been raised in a marvelous way to new life in the restoration of Israel and the Holy City, Jerusalem. Today, but a generation after Auschwitz, it is not the future of the Jewish people, but the future of the Christian church, that is put to the question.

To be sure, ecstatic utterance about the future is common enough in Christian circles. A recent fad of the younger theologians has been the celebration of "natural epiphanies," giving an aura of spirituality to the natural moments of human excitement—and a fillip of spirituality to the cloudy hopes that spring from every human heart. But a wise teacher has recently warned—

It is one thing to ask: Where and when does an epiphany of the divine eternal, immutable and primordial take place in the realm of the human, temporal and transient? And it is another thing to ask: When and where does the God of the promise reveal his faithfulness and in it himself and his presence?²⁷

Of "natural epiphanies" the most impressively *geistig* (spiritual) that I ever saw was the heathen religious ceremony which introduced a Nazi Party rally in Nürnberg in July of 1939!

To have faith is to remember, to re-appropriate, to re-enact, unique events that carry great truth. Adolf Hitler's view of the future, with all the inflated language about "providence" and the vague euphoria of Teutonic *Volksgemeinschaft*, was a vision of hell: exploitation and tyranny for slave peoples, privilege and arrogant domain for those in power, mass murder for the Jews. For those who remember the covenant and the promises, the vision of the future carries, not violence and war and dehumanization, but justice and mercy, righteousness and peace. In the end, in God's good time, men of all tribes and nations, and from the farthest corners of the earth, shall gather about His holy hill and hear His voice and obey His will. The people that carries history, by its living and by its style of life, is an arrow pointing into that time to come.

27. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 43.

In the words of a modern Jewish poet (translated)—

Whatever will be in the future, already was in the past,
And whatever was not, will never be.
Therefore, I trust in the future, because I have kept before me
The image of the past: This is vision and song. (Uri Zvi Greenberg)

In the words of Thomas Masaryk (paraphrased) “Tradition for us is not the dead hand of the past pressing down the present: Tradition is the covenant of fathers and sons!” For believing Christians and Jews, the anticipation of the coming Kingdom can never be confused with vague and ecstatic language about humanity-in-general or the shrill war-cries of tribal sachems who confuse their own erotic circles with the fullness of time and space. The matter of the future is the matter of our present concrete responsibilities; the future, like the present, is informed by a wisdom which is greater than our own that has come to us across many generations.

We know that He has promised release to the captives and sight to the blind (Isa. 61:1–3, LK 4:18). As to the common future of Jews and Christians: the deliverance of the captives is under way, as a restored Israel gives evidence; men and brethren, when will the blind see?

Cahan's "Rise of David Levinsky": Archetype of American Jewish Fiction

DAN VOGEL

SOME YEARS AGO, IN A RECONSIDERATION OF Abraham Cahan's 1917 novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, Isaac Rosenfeld declared, "Levinsky [is] the essential Jewish type of the Dispersion."¹ The truth of this assertion is underlined, it seems to me, by the rehearsal of some essential elements of theme, characterization, and method in later American Jewish fiction. My purpose here is to explore the ways in which *The Rise of David Levinsky* is archetypal—archetypal, not in the sense of racial memory, but in the sense of community experience during the three generations since the flood of East European Jewish immigration in the 1880's. Nor do I mean that Cahan's hero is the ideal Jewish type of the Dispersion. Rather, he is the prototype whose features of personality and career, whether for ill or for good, are reborn in later protagonists of this genre.

The origin of the type is in the closed, theocratic world of the *shtetl* in Russia. In his sustained reminiscence, which makes up the entire novel, David recalls his early Gorky-an circumstances in Antomir, a *shtetl* somewhere in the Russian Pale. His father, it should be noted for later discussion, is dead; his mother, who scrimps in order to send David to *heder*, the religious school, dies in an altercation with anti-Semites, and it is of her only that the orphan dreams. Shifting for himself, David joins the round of his fellow-students in going from house to house for meals. Thus he grows into adolescence, a time which marks his discovery of girls and the concomitant neglect of Talmud study. In time, David joins the migration to America. He arrives poor and ignorant, garbed and hirsute in the manner of the greenhorn Talmudic student. The remainder of Levinsky's tale is about his peddling, his drift from Orthodox Judaism, his sexual debauchery, his acquisition of two million dollars, his loneliness, his futile attempts to marry and, finally, his total dissatisfaction with his life. He is still diffident in the presence of women, fearful in the presence of waiters, and indecisive in the presence of his workers. Though Cahan has not made David Levinsky into a *shlemiel*, he portrays him as a *nebbich* with a veneer.

Thus, Abraham Cahan formulated the first two archetypal characteristics of American-Jewish literature: the theme of the consequences of

1. Isaac Rosenfeld, "America, Land of the Sad Millionaires," *Commentary*, XIV (August 1952), p. 134.

the collision of old world Orthodoxy with new world materialistic emancipation, and the anti-hero as the central character of this drama.

I think we can better appreciate Cahan's achievement in *The Rise of David Levinsky* by noticing that this protagonist of 1917 is, himself, the end-product of two earlier major efforts by Cahan to depict the new Jewish immigrant to America. Before publishing that novel, Cahan wrote, in English, *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896) and "The Imported Bridegroom" (1898).² *Yekl* anticipates the later works negatively: that is to say, it is important in hindsight to see how different Cahan's emphasis is in this novella. The chief figure is Yekl, or Jake in English, whom we meet on the Lower East Side three years after his arrival in America. He had landed in Boston, sojourned there for a time, and now is living in the New York ghetto. He has emigrated alone, leaving aged parents, a young wife, and an infant son back home in Russia. Jake has long since given up his quaint religious upbringing: he is a modern American sweatshop worker, and a devil with the dance hall girls, for he had kept his married state a secret.

In time, he brings over his wife and son. But Gitl proves to be old fashioned, dowdy, and unexciting—unfit to be the consort of the new "Yenkee," as Jake sees himself. (Henry Roth, almost 40 years later, will exploit a similar situation.) Certainly, Gitl is not like the sharp, vulgarly Americanized girls with whom Jake has been making his mark. So, with some intermittent misgivings, Jake slides apart from her, and they are finally divorced, he about to marry the sharpest of the dance hall beauties, Gitl about to be courted by a scholarly, gentle, less Americanized sewing-machine operator. At the end, Jake is disquieted; he fears that he has been cheated, somehow, of the sense of freedom, superiority, and ebullience that his Americanized conduct should have given him.

This feeling of dissatisfaction, rising at the moment of seeming triumph, will become a Cahan hallmark. But here, in this early story, it is significant to note that Jake's disillusionment has nothing to do with the classic attempt at upward mobility nor with the loss of religious tradition, for Cahan does not deal with either theme here. The loss of tradition is only passingly dealt with in the story. There is no pain upon its loss; no substitute, like materialistic striving, in place of the Judaism that is rejected; no feeling of emancipation is suggested. We get the feeling that Jake's restlessness is inborn and that the ghetto served, not as the cause, but as the catalyst of his marital drift, divorce, and discontent. Cahan does not offer his tale as typical or universal among East Side Jews. Certainly, Jake is no hero of the Americanizing process. As Howells noted in his review,³ this is but a realistic story, perhaps reminding him of the tone and manner of Stephen Crane's *Maggie* (1893).

2. Reprinted together, in 1970, by Dover Publications, Inc., New York.

3. Bernard G. Richards, in Introduction to Dover ed., p. vii.

Two years later, in "The Imported Bridegroom," which Cahan wrote as the lead story for a collection of his already published magazine stories, we begin to see a greater universalization of the ghetto experience. Reb Asriel Stroon, a widower, who had played loose with *halakhic* laws in order to amass his real estate fortune, now fanatically returns to religion. In fact, he goes back to his *shtetl* in Russia to find a bridegroom for his daughter, Flora. On her part, Flora is horrified, for she dreams of marrying a Jewish doctor, clean-shaven, American, modern, educated. Reb Asriel, in his hometown, discovers that you can't really go home again, but stays long enough to buy at auction a brilliant, shy Talmudic genius. He imports him for Flora.

At first, to Asriel's frustration, the wishfully emancipated Flora and the bewildered Shaya do not hit it off. Then Flora begins to teach him English. From that point on, the way to hell is opened. Shaya learns to read Socialist theory, which leads to the neglect of his Talmud studies, then to the abandonment of religious scruples and, finally, to outright atheism. He and Flora marry civilly only, and Flora dutifully accompanies her bridegroom to a free-thinking soirée, where Swedes, Englishmen, Russians, and Scots read and discuss the texts of utopian theory. At the end, Cahan pictures Shaya listening raptly to the new revelation, and Flora, unable to compete in this deeply intellectual discussion, feeling cheated and excluded from "Shaya's entire future."

Again disappointment at the moment of triumph. But now Cahan's attention has shifted. First of all, the chief character is the father. Significantly, the mother in this story is dead. The father dominates his daughter, who feels smothered by the weight of this dominance, desires to get out from under, and does. Of course, it will be recognized that the same story is told over and over again later in American-Jewish fiction, but with the sexes reversed.

It is no accident, I think, that Cahan does it this way in "The Imported Bridegroom." After all, immersed as he was in contemporary fiction, he had Henry James and W. D. Howells⁴ to point the way to him about how mothers dominated daughters in genteel American society. How a transplanted Jewish mother might have dealt with Flora might have made an interesting story, but Cahan did not write it. His interest here is the father, and presently I shall suggest why.

Secondly, the major theme of this novella is how an innocent refugee from the *shtetl* loses his Jewishness because of his exposure to America—a more pointed theme than the one in *Yekl*. To fill the vacuum created by the loss, Cahan offers one of the two religions prevalent at the turn of the century—Socialism. (The other, economic mobility, will be David Levinsky's.) But the handling of the theme is strange for Cahan. He himself was an old *yeshivah boḥur* who became devoted to free-thinking

4. Ronald Sanders, *The Downtown Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 184

socialism, and the last scene of "The Imported Bridegroom," says Ronald Sanders, in *The Downtown Jews*, was drawn from an incident in his own life.⁵ But Cahan does not make Shaya the new immigrant intellectual hero, passionately embracing the dogma of progress. Indeed, he makes Shaya a source of disappointment and pain to his benefactor and his beloved. Cahan forces our sympathy upon Asriel and Flora, the woe-begone greenhorns who simply are not with it. And the way Cahan describes the brilliant Shaya's participation in the avant-garde group restrains our admiration for his intellectual courage. "The Imported Bridegroom" is a story in which the rejection of tradition is depicted as an unretrieved loss and a betrayal, rather than as a triumph over provinciality; and there is nothing—neither new doctrine nor economic ascendancy—to take its place.

When Cahan turned his attention entirely to the Shaya-figure, whom he renamed David Levinsky—he has his hero try the other religion that was touted at the turn of the century: financial success. However, the acquisition of money and position as the compensation for the loss of Jewishness, fails the test. And, in depicting the failure, Cahan concomitantly perceives that the East European heritage offers a glimmering of hope in the midst of despair. In the final paragraphs of his confessional, Levinsky says:

When I think of these things, when I am in this sort of mood, I pity myself for a victim of circumstances. At the height of my business success I feel that if I had my life to live over again I should never think of a business career.

I don't seem to be able to get accustomed to my luxurious life. I am always more or less conscious of my good clothes, of the high quality of my office furniture, of the power I wield over the men in my pay. As I have said in another connection, I still have a lurking fear of restaurant waiters.

I can never forget the days of my misery. I cannot escape from my old self. My past and my present do not comport well. David, the poor lad swinging over the Talmud volume at the Preacher's Synagogue [in Antomir] seems to have more in common with my inner identity than David Levinsky, the well-known cloak-manufacturer.⁶

"I cannot escape from my old self." In one sentence, Cahan announces a major theme of future American Jewish fiction: the attempt to escape Jewishness and the continual (though not invariable) realization that there is no escape. It is the attempt to escape Jewish identity and the consequent realization that the search for inner identity demands some sort of return. Cahan contains this theme in the story that has since become typical: the East European Jew confronting the freedoms of an emancipated America. He describes the competing attractions of piety,

5. Ibid., 67–8.

6. *The Rise of David Levinsky* (New York, 1917; reprinted as a Torchbook paperback by Harper and Row, New York, 1960), p. 530. Page references are to the reprint designated as RDL.

or at least of a Jewish ethos, on one side, and economic materialism and social belonging on the other, together with the almost inevitable drift from Judaism toward a vestigial Jewishness. Later writers, like Jerome Weidman and Philip Roth, will carry the story even further, to the point where their protagonists simply ignore their Jewish origins or embrace outright assimilation. Sanford Marovitz has called this theme the central one:

The spiritual hunger of the immigrant Jew in America. . . . Those who traded their faith for the gospel of materialism suffered the pangs of loneliness regardless of their wealth, prestige, or position. . . .⁷

In post-Cahan American Jewish fiction, the story of competing codes of thought and conduct is told over and over again. Never mind that Augie March, Marjorie Morningstar, Alexander Portnoy, Eli Peck, Moses Elkanah Herzog, Stern, and a host of others were not born in the *shtetl*. The *shtetl* ethos has filtered into their consciousness, as it never left Levinsky's, and forces them to evaluate, and in many cases to decry, their slipping into the slough of despond of American social and philosophical emancipation. What Cahan did right at the beginning was to anticipate the tendency of American Jewish fiction—for all its claims of universality—to be inspired with parochial introspection. And this parochialism often results in some kind of re-integration with the old time-value system: rarely halakhic (although it does occur in Blankfort's *The Strong Hand*, [1951], or Potok's three novels, [1967, 1969, 1972]); sometimes merely habitual (as in Wouk's novel, [1955]); perhaps psychological (like Eli Peck's moment of epiphany in Roth's story, "Eli, the Fanatic," [1957]); at best, spiritual (as in Bellow's *Herzog*, [1964]).

Cahan emphasizes this theme by reprising a motif from "The Imported Bridegroom"—the transference of the traditional faith in learning from religious to secular matters:

My old religion had gradually falen to pieces [recollects David Levinsky], and if its place was taken by something else, if there was something that appealed to the better man in me, to what was purest in my thought, and most sacred in my emotions, that something was the red, church-like structure on the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and Twenty-third Street [the City College of New York].

It was the synagogue of my new life. Nor is this merely a figure of speech: the building really appealed to me as a temple, as a House of Sanctity, as we call the ancient Temple of Jerusalem. At least that was the term I would fondly apply to it, years later, in my retrospective broodings upon the first few years of my life in America.⁸

Though he never could drag himself away from making money to enroll, Levinsky did find the time to read Herbert Spencer.

Well, the genre-children of David Levinsky did go to college. None-

7. Sanford Marovitz, "The Lonely New Americans of Abraham Cahan," *American Quarterly*, XX (1968), p. 197.

8. *RDL*, 169.

theless, the new American Haskalah, when taken in place of, not as complementary to, the heritage of the Temple in Jerusalem, landed them in the same alienated corner in which Cahan placed Levinsky.

Through the theme of alienation, Cahan introduced into American Jewish literature the anti-hero as protagonist. Let us understand the nature of David's anti-heroism. No doubt, in a sense, Cahan saw the "yeshivah to penthouse" progression as but a variation of America's heroic myth of "rags to riches" or "log cabin to White House." No doubt he took pride in the kind of person that Levinsky represents—the green-horn who meets the challenges of a totally new way of life and overcomes them in terms of the host society. In this sense, the old role of hero, as representative of his community in a confrontation with the Other and in the ultimate rush to victory, can still be discerned in David Levinsky.

But Cahan perceived that the nascent Jewish hero in America would find no satisfaction in his heroism. Much of the novel is given over to portraying the erosion of self-confidence and of any sense of accomplishment in success or sacrifice. Cahan's intent is not to delineate a romantic hero, who scores a victory over the odds of life; nor a realistic hero, who accommodates himself to defeat with dignity; nor a tragic hero, whose catastrophe is his victory. Whatever heroism lies in the character of David Levinsky lies in the recognition that his strengths and persistence have led him only to spiritual dissatisfaction and misery, and that all along he has avoided making the truly hard decisions. In the welter of these anti-heroic emotions, however, David Levinsky retains an important trait of the ancient heroes: he still represents his community, then and since.

In his portrayal of the anti-hero, Cahan considers two forms of spiritual weakness: the arguments of determinism and of self-pity. His rejection of the first presages the rejection of it by later writers in his genre. As for the second, however, Cahan's theme of self-pity can now be seen as an early symptom of a syndrome in American-Jewish literature that will be climaxed by the hatred of the Jewish self and of the Jewish mother.

Desperate, in his alienation, for a modicum of self-esteem, David Levinsky cries out, "I pity myself for a victim of circumstances." Quite candidly, the plea that he is a victim of circumstances sounds convincing to our generation, disposed as we are to find existential or Freudian or sociological justification to replace the old idea of guilt. Indeed, even Mr. Marovitz is persuaded, going so far as to compare David with Clyde Griffiths, the predestinated hero of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925), and to assert that David's future was predetermined in the old country before he ever started on his way to America.⁹ It seems

9. Marovitz, *Op. cit.*, 206.

to me, however, that Cahan's whole point in this novel is thus turned around.

The very title of the novel shows its affinity to the story of the successful rags-to-riches paint manufacturer in Howells' *Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), rather than to the story of the bewildered, unsuccessful youth from the Middle West. American literary history records the warm friendship of Howells and Cahan, and, as John Higham points out in his introduction to the Torchbook edition,¹⁰ the novel is written in the tradition of Howells as well as of Dreiser, but the earlier Dreiser of *Sister Carrie* (1900, 1911). Dreiser's point in that novel is that success and social acceptance lead but to inner dissatisfaction and misery, precisely the *donnée* of *The Rise of David Levinsky*. And Howells means to tell us, as Cahan does, that success in business is not the true rise for a man. He must re-evaluate himself in terms of a traditional ethos—Christian and Yankee in the one, Jewish in the other—which in the last paragraph of Cahan's novel is hinted at.

There is, then, in Cahan's work, as in its literary progeny, a retreat from the logical finality of naturalism. Immediately after Levinsky utters his claim of victimization, he says that, were he able to do it all over again, he would have done something else. So he did have a choice, didn't he? The power to choose is Moses Herzog's discovery in Bellow's novel, and, indeed, is the climax of it. When Herzog rises above the feeling of victimization, then he decides to begin a new life. In almost all of American-Jewish fiction, the power of the Other—whether object, circumstance, or person—wields tremendous influence, but rarely to the point of total enervation. There is, at the very least, a confessional and, therefore, a ray of hope.

More important than the theme of determinism in the confessional is the strain of self-pity that begins in *The Rise of David Levinsky* and permeates much of future American Jewish writing. Already in Cahan's novel, self-pity develops into a lack of self-confidence and positive self-dislike. In time, this feeling will be developed into a castigation and denigration of the Jewish ego—in short, into self-hatred, which so disturbed the readers of *Commentary* magazine when it published a few of Philip Roth's stories in this vein.

Out of the *sturm und drang* of this process, the anti-hero emerges as an "I" persona that is solipsistic in its view of the world. I refer, not only to the predilection in American Jewish fiction toward the method of first-person narration but, also, to the way the psyche of the "I" persona has developed. *The Rise of David Levinsky* is in the first-person, but it is not a first-person narrative in the tradition of Conrad and James—the dispassionate development of moral perception and judgment in the narrator. Rather, Cahan's tone is in the line of Poe and Joyce—the pas-

10. *RDL*, viii and x.

sionate self-revelation of despair, stress, pain, and spiritual nakedness. Since then, with whatever variations of first-person method—*Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) is entirely so; *Herzog* weaves it in with agility; Mark-field's *Teitelbaum's Window* (1970) in sections harks back to the epistolary variation—this psychological catharsis has become a feature of recent fiction in this genre.

It is the solipsistic "I," the extremity of anti-heroism, that has disfigured the Jewish mother in American Jewish literature and created a popular, if notorious, caricature. In Cahan's book, the pattern is quite innocently established: the father is dead and the mother becomes the center of the son's psyche. This situation, a generation later, becomes typical: the father is physically or symbolically dead; the mother survives to become her son's hang-up. But her role has been reevaluated since Cahan's time. Once she was praised for her influence upon her son's life. Now the solipsistic "I," casting about for a villain that has caused the hatred of self, accuses her of smothering her son's ego and freedom. She is the Freudian bogey of those who try to get out from under the accident or divine plan of their being born Jewish.

Because American-Jewish fiction since the second World War has become so popular and, along with it, the theme of the withdrawn papa, the *yiddishe mama*, and the choked son, this Oedipal-looking trinity has been thought of as uniquely Jewish. Lately, Professor Harold Fisch has argued that it is not Jewish at all, but is a by-product of the French Revolution's intellectual emancipation. In literature, Professor Fisch finds, the most blatant non-Jewish example of it is D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), four years before the appearance of *The Rise of David Levinsky*, in which Mrs. Morel is a Gentile *yiddishe mama*.¹¹ But this, for American-Jewish literature, smacks too much of the sexual and not enough of the cultural—too much Freud, as it were, and not enough Jung.

For Abraham Cahan and his heirs, the father symbolizes tradition, like Reb Asriel in "The Imported Bridegroom." When, in the story, tradition has been lost, the father is sick, dead, or a non-entity, as in so many stories from *David Levinsky* right up to Friedman's *A Mother's Kisses* (1964) and Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*. This plot dominates our fiction because it is the reflection of the American-Jewish experience—the rejection of Orthodoxy. This is the theme, amply supported, of Professor Allen Guttman's recent study.¹²

There is, however, a sporadic, but definite, parallel line of stories in

11. Harold Fisch, "Fathers, Mothers, Sons, and Lovers," *Midstream*, XVIII (March 1972), pp. 43, 44. Although Prof. Fisch sees the father as the symbol of tradition in European Jewish and Israeli literature, he does not make the point for American-Jewish fiction.

12. Allen Guttman, *The Jewish Writer in America: Assimilation and the Crisis of Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 13 and, indeed, in the rest of the book.

which tradition is seen as strong and viable, and in these the mother is cast in a distinctly lesser role. Thus, in "The Imported Bridegroom" and in Chaim Potok's first two novels, where tradition plays a central role, the mothers are absent and the fathers dominate. Even Philip Roth, perhaps instinctively, pays obeisance to the power of tradition as embodied in the father. Eli Peck, the fanatic, bursting out from under the smothering weight of his super-sophisticated, assimilated wife and of his own guilt feelings, dons the smelly garb of the young *hasid*. But the gesture is not yet a complete assuagement. He must run to confront his new-born son, brought before him in the hospital nursery; and, promising himself that his son will one day wear these gabardines, he cries out, "*I'm the father!*"¹³ Though Eli is mad, we are left with the feeling that he has reached a spiritual insight not vouchsafed his assimilated neighbors. He has fallen into what Melville called "the madness of vital truth."

Indeed, cued once more by Cahan, we may be on the verge of witnessing the restoration of the mother to a more healthy place in the triangle of the Jewish family. Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* may be read as such a story. Though first published in 1941, it was reprinted just a few years ago to popular and critical acclaim. In *Herzog*, Bellow has Moses' mother remain in his memory as the paragon to which he hopes his daughter will aspire; and she is part of that poignant memory that includes his ineffectual but wonderful bootlegger father, his compassionate mother, and the bootlegger's sons saying ancient Hebrew prayers. And Chaim Potok, after two novels in which the mothers of his heroes are either literally or figuratively dead, resurrects the true *yiddishe mama* in Rivkeh Lev in *My Name is Asher Lev* (1972), a story about a God-endowed artist growing up in a Brooklyn *hasidic* community. It is significant, I think, that Asher's father is continually traveling, but leaves behind him the power of his personality and his traditional role which his wife must interpret for their son during his absences. This is precisely the role that fate and tradition devolved upon the mother of David Levinsky, to whom David's memory returns time and again later in life, a factor in his spiritually fructive dissatisfaction. Rivkeh Lev's presence in her son's psyche is what frees his artistic soul from the misunderstanding of his community, and yet prevents his drift into non-Orthodoxy.

These novels exemplify one of my emphases in this essay. Cahan insists that neither the theme of escape from Jewishness nor the self-hating nature of the American-Jewish anti-hero sentences him to a spiritual demise. Many critics of American literature have pointed to the theme of the self's spiritual death and rebirth. I suggest that, in the last chapter, David Levinsky's summation of his life implies such an awakening. But do not mistake me. The evidence in our fiction since Cahan does not reflect a religious revival and Cahan writes no portrayal of such. The com-

13. Bantam paperback edition of *Goodbye, Columbus* (New York, 1963), p. 215.

petition between the *shtetl* ethos and the attractions of a materialistic haskalah society still goes on. Nostalgia for a lost, if seamy, Jewish paradise is not rebirth. And yet it was mainly emotion, not doctrine, that distracted our American Jewish heroes from their grandfathers' path. It may yet be the factor that will bring them to the threshold of spiritual peace. David Levinsky, of course, has no guarantee, but his suffering does lead to possibility.

Professor Guttman thinks otherwise. He argues that American-Jewish fiction is the record of a generation of Jews that refuses to go on being Jews or to transmit Jewishness.¹⁴ Certainly, there is much sociological evidence to support his reading of the literature. Yet his study shows also that assimilation leads but to a crisis of identity. There is no epiphany or fulfillment depicted in stories that describe the adoption of a non-Jewish way of life. Consequently, even at the moment when he thinks he has successfully escaped, the straggler is still beckoned back, just as Cahan perceived more than half-a-century ago. I submit that there are too many marranos among our assimilated anti-heroes to permit total acceptance of Guttman's bleak conclusion. Such are the heroes of some of the best old and new writers, like Lewisohn, Bellow, Philip Roth, Malamud, Wallant. All of them are heirs of Abraham Cahan.

Apparently then, in theme and vision, in method and thought, Abe Cahan blazed a trail for later American-Jewish fiction. Certainly, this trail has been broadened and strengthened so that stories of American Jews reflect, not only the experience of the East European immigrant community for three generations, but the general condition of mankind. This is an attempt by our authors to declassify this fiction as ethnic, and to incorporate it as characteristic of American literature in its totality. I refer the reader to an interview with Saul Bellow, in May 1971, in the *New York Times Book Review* for the expression of this sentiment.¹⁵ But the attempt is doomed to failure. Cahan's story—of one who tried to get out from under his Jewishness and learned that he could not—is archetypal of a specific genre of fiction, expressing a specific communal experience in America.

14. Guttman, *Op. cit.*, 226-7.

15. Sunday, May 9, 1971, sec. 7, p. 12.

Imagining the Holocaust: Mr. Sammler's Planet, and Others

EDWARD ALEXANDER

THE SUBJECT OF THE HOLOCAUST IS EXPLICITLY introduced into *Mr. Sammler's Planet* by means of a ferocious attack by the novel's protagonist on Hannah Arendt's thesis that Eichmann was the most ordinary of men, virtually a walking cliché, and that, in general, the perpetrators of the unspeakable evil of the death camps were not great criminals but just the petty bureaucrats everywhere produced by the principle of division of labor. Up until this point in the novel, we have learned that Mr. Sammler, who is over seventy, was in Poland during the war, that in 1940 he had lost his wife and lost an eye, and that in 1947 he and his daughter, Shula, had been located by relatives in a DP camp in Salzburg and brought over to the United States. Hannah Arendt's thesis about the "banality of evil" which prevailed in Nazi Germany is proposed to Sammler by his niece, Margotte.

Although Sammler has long since recognized the futility of arguing with his niece, his reply itself is passionate rather than merely formal. What he says is that Hannah Arendt has been duped, that the "banality" which she purports to discover in these mass murderers was merely camouflage. " 'What better way to get the curse out of murder than to make it look ordinary, boring, or trite?' " (22)¹ Intellectuals with literary training expect every wicked hero to be like Richard III. The Nazis, he contends, never forgot their old, normal knowledge of what is meant by murder. " 'That is very old human knowledge. The best and purest human beings, from the beginning of time, have understood that life is sacred. To defy that old understanding is not banality. There was a conspiracy against the sacredness of life.' " ² No-one, he maintains, can believe that the abolition of conscience is a trivial or banal matter unless she believes that human life itself is trivial. The truth of the matter is that " 'The woman professor's enemy is modern civilization itself. She is only using the Germans to attack the twentieth century—to denounce it in terms invented by Germans. Making use of a tragic history to promote the foolish ideas of Weimar intellectuals.' " (22)

To what uses, then, Bellow seems to be asking, should that "tragic

1. All page references in parentheses are to the first editions of the novels.

2. Mr. Sammler's severity with Miss Arendt causes him partially to misrepresent her views. What she says, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, is not that the Nazi system kept people like Eichmann ignorant of what they were doing, but that it kept them from equating what they were doing with their old, "normal" knowledge of murder.

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history" be put? The novel has already raised the question of whether the notion that we learn things from suffering is anything more than cant. The problem of crime is much in Sammler's mind when we first meet him because he has been observing a black pickpocket regularly at work on the Riverside Drive bus and has made a futile effort to interest police in the matter. Interest in such criminals seems nowadays, he reflects, to come mainly from people like his young relative, Angela Gruner, who is attracted by "the romance of the outlaw" and sends her father's money to defense funds for black murderers and rapists. He, himself, is repelled by the notion that style, art, and meaning may attach to criminals and their crimes. But why is it that the most memorable moment in, say, *Crime and Punishment*, is the instant when Raskolnikov crushes the old woman's head with an ax? It is deplorable, yet true, that "horror, crime, murder, did vivify all the phenomena, the most ordinary details of experience. In evil as in art there was illumination. It was, of course, like the tale by Charles Lamb, burning down a house to roast a pig. Was a general conflagration necessary?" (15) And is the illumination and enlargement of vision more than an illusion, a necessary fiction by which we live? No sooner has Sammler expressed his view of Miss Arendt's explanation of tragic history than he stands back in dismay from all arguments and explanations and thinks to himself: "All will explain everything to all, until the next, the new common version is ready. This version, a residue of what people for a century or so say to one another, will be, like the old, a fiction." (23)

Sammler has long been suspicious of "explanations," particularly since the Germans have been the most prolific and methodical producers of them. But Sammler "was himself no mean explainer." He had been a child of the Enlightenment and had made H. G. Wells the object of his life's work. But now his work proceeds with monumental slowness and the minimum of conviction and interest because he is aware that "poor Wells, the natural teacher, the sex emancipator, the explainer, the humane blesser of mankind, could in the end only blast and curse everyone. Of course he wrote such things in his final sickness, horribly depressed by World War II." (32) The Enlightenment vision of man in rational control of his mental and physical universe, and potentially able to use that control to create a heavenly city on earth, had not reckoned with those subterranean forces that erupted in World War II and the death camps. That is why Sammler, in his post-concentration camp incarnation, spends all his time in the Forty-second Street Library reading Meister Eckhardt, who celebrates the poor in spirit and advises that God will comfort you only when you have given up all hope of comfort and consolation from creatures and creatureliness.

But in Sammler's Manhattan very few people seem to know that the Enlightenment is an exploded dream. On the contrary, wherever Sammler

looks now he sees “the increasing triumph of Enlightenment—Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery!” (36) Instead of abolishing the ancient privileges of aristocracy, the Enlightenment had universalized the idea of privilege, and now virtually nobody was willing to leave the earth unsatiated. “A full bill of demand and complaint was therefore presented by each individual. Non-negotiable. Recognizing no scarcity of supply in any human department. Enlightenment? Marvelous! But out of hand, wasn’t it?” (38) The universal demand for aristocratic privileges, when combined with “the dangerous lunging, staggering crazy violence of fanatics,” portend for Sammler a reenactment of the debacle he had witnessed and experienced in Europe. “Like many people who had seen the world collapse once, Mr. Sammler entertained the possibility it might collapse twice.” (37)

The humane and liberal values which Sammler holds seem as exposed to ridicule and as insecure as they had been in the Weimar Republic. In the Manhattan of the 'sixties as in the Germany of the 'twenties and 'thirties, it is the official bastions of sweetness and light that yield most readily to the forces of irrationality and barbarism. Sammler is invited to lecture at Columbia on his recollections of English intellectual life in the 'thirties, which he had experienced first-hand during his residence in Bloomsbury. All of the students in the audience are humorless, most are bored, and a few become rude, contentious, and obscene. Sammler has offended against revolutionary piety by quoting George Orwell’s remark that British radicals were protected by the Royal Navy. One member of the audience, particularly sensitive to anything that smacks of anti-Communism, regales Sammler with the sexual-excremental rhetoric of left-wing militancy: “‘That’s a lot of shit.’ . . . ‘Orwell was a fink. He was a sick counterrevolutionary. It’s good he died when he did. And what you are saying is shit.’ Turning to the audience, extending violent arms and raising his palms like a Greek dancer, he said, ‘Why do you listen to this effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He’s dead. He can’t come.’” (46) A few in the audience feebly chide the interruptor for his behavior, but most are sympathetic to him and hostile to Sammler. No, enlightenment and rationalism have not routed the demons from their traditional strongholds, but have invited them into the sanctuary.

No sooner has Sammler escaped from the barbarians of the academy than he is subjected to another version of the *argumentum ab genitalibus*. The pickpocket, whom he has before observed on the bus, now notices that he is being observed, follows Sammler into the lobby of his building, pins him to the wall, and forces the old man, who has just suffered a paroxysmal cardiac attack, to contemplate his exposed and brandished penis. No warning or threat or, indeed, speech of any kind is deemed necessary by the black man. He, like the Columbia students, has invoked

the irrefutable modern argument. "Then it was returned to the trousers. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*" (54)

Having barely survived this day's encounters with the revolution in its youthful, sexual, and black manifestations, Sammler staggers to his room and is greeted with what looks like a providential message in the form of a manuscript, filched by his daughter from an Indian professor visiting at Columbia, entitled *The Future of the Moon*. Its first sentence virtually leaps out at Sammler: "How long will this earth remain the only home of Man?" Surely, after the day's travail, the question must be recognized as a providential leading, to which Sammler responds with grim enthusiasm: "How long? Oh, Lord, you bet! Wasn't it the time—the very hour to go? For every purpose under heaven. A time to gather stones together, a time to cast away stones. Considering the earth itself not as a stone cast but as something to cast oneself from—to be divested of. To blow this great blue, white, green planet, or to be blown from it." (55)

Before Sammler can think very deeply about the implications of Dr. Lal's plans for colonizing the moon, he is distracted by thoughts of his recent encounter with the pickpocket and then by a visit from Walter Bruch, who is also engaged in "the sex business"—he falls in love with women's arms. Thoughts of the sexual madness which is overwhelming the Western world lead Sammler to think of his erotic relative, Angela Gruner, and then of his recent visit to her father, his nephew, Elya. Dr. Gruner now lies in a hospital in the aftermath of surgery in which a device has been placed in his throat to regulate the flow of blood in the carotid artery to the brain, which had begun to leak through weak walls. His nephew's precarious state brings Sammler back with a jolt to the question of whether there is any visible future, any messiah worth waiting for, besides death. As he looks out of the hospital window, he notices large white X's on the window panes of a vacant building slated for demolition. In a semantic universe, these scrawls are surely eloquent of something, but what exactly is it?

As Sammler tries to puzzle out the meaning of these portents, his mind travels back to the time when he first turned to the external world for such meanings. It had been in wartime Poland, when he was hidden in the mausoleum of a family called Mezvinski. During a whole summer and part of autumn he had sought metaphysical meanings in a piece of straw, a spider thread, a beetle or a sparrow. But there was no meaning to be found, at least none that it was easy to live with. Viewed in retrospect, his residence in the mausoleum foreshadowed a kind of living death which was to be his only future. The yellow light of Polish summer which filtered through the mausoleum door is no different from the light penetrating his Manhattan apartment now; it is a light which does not measure growth or change, but, rather, accompanies "endless literal hours

in which one is internally eaten up. Eaten because coherence is lacking. Perhaps as a punishment for having failed to find coherence." The reason why both coherence and sacredness have been eluding Sammler since he entered the mausoleum is now revealed to us in detail for the first time in this book:

Yes, go and find it [sacredness] when everyone is murdering everyone. When Antonina [his wife] was murdered. When he himself underwent murder beside her. When he and sixty or seventy others, all stripped naked and having dug their own grave, were fired upon and fell in. Bodies upon his own body. Crushing. His dead wife nearby somewhere. Struggling out much later from the weight of corpses, crawling out of the loose soil. Scraping on his belly. Hiding in a shed. Finding a rag to wear. Lying in the woods many days. (96)

Here we arrive at the bed-rock of Sammler's experience, the anchor of his imagination and intellect. The past experience of the death camps is eternally present to him, and restrains him from those "fantasies of vaulting into higher states," which in his view are the defining characteristic of contemporary madness. It is also what enables him to recognize that, on the window opposite the hospital, "the spirit of the time through the unconscious agency of a boy's hand had scrawled its augury." (96) Having become a symbol himself—of the human will to live and the power of endurance—he is alive to the symbolic nature of reality and to the omnipresence of the angel of death.

Once we know something of Sammler's experience of the death camps, we recognize that he has already inhabited a different world. Having already returned from a different planet, Sammler approaches with caution and skepticism plans to transport man to still another one, through science or revolution. After a day spent with radical students and black sexual potentates, such alternatives do seem attractive. "'New York makes one think about the collapse of civilization, about Sodom and Gomorrah, the end of the world.'" (307–8) But if you have been in a death camp, you know that there are worse things even than student radicalism, urban crime (legal and illegal), and sexual insanity. Sammler seems torn between thinking that these things are leading us back to the hell from which he himself has escaped, and seeing them as almost necessary accompaniments of the human condition, evils only to be removed by a much greater evil. He

denied himself the privilege of the high-principled intellectual who must always be applying the purest standards and thumping the rest of his species on the head. When he tried to imagine a just social order, he could not do it. A noncorrupt society? He could not do that either. There were no revolutions that he could remember which had not been made for justice, freedom, and pure goodness. Their last state was always more nihilistic than the first. (80)

Hitler, after all, had been the century's most potent and successful revolutionary. True, the planet did seem more and more intolerable, madness

and poison more and more ubiquitous. But would escape to other worlds help much? Was it really plausible to believe with Dr. Lal that " 'Access to central data mechanisms may foster a new Adam' "? Certainly Sammler is not a man of these dark times and knows that "present arrangements [are] not, *sub specie aeternitatis*, the truth," but he knows just as certainly that "one should be satisfied with such truth as one could get by approximation." (140)

If Sammler denies himself the intellectual's luxury of judging others only by the purest standards, he does allow himself the luxury of "non-intimidation by doom." (138) For unlike the purveyors of apocalypse who surround him in Manhattan, he has himself actually been doomed, not once but twice, first by the Germans and then by the Poles.

No matter how deeply buried within his subconscious, the experience of the concentration camp rises to the surface and asserts itself as the chief determinant of such life as is left to him after twice escaping his doom. We now learn, almost half-way through the novel, more of the details of Sammler's visit to the underground of the death camps and even of his own marriage to the god of darkness which prevailed in them. We learn how he and his wife and others had been ordered to strip naked and then wait to be shot in the mass grave, how after the executions had taken place and the tons of soil had been thrown into the pit he had managed to push aside the corpses, emerge choked with blood, and creep away on his belly. We learn, too, that Sammler has been something more than the victim, which the account of his experience as an elderly man in Manhattan, combined with the recollections of his experience in the camp, would suggest. For after his escape he had been a partisan in the Zamosht Forest, where he and other starving men chewed at roots and grasses to stay alive, and also exploded bridges, unseated rails, and killed German stragglers in the dark of night. Sammler does not need parlor games played with pistols and telephone books to remind himself that even in a secularized world hell exists. For in the forest he had disarmed a German soldier and twice shot the man through the head as he pleaded for mercy and told Sammler that he had children. He had then stood at that place of last resort in the human soul, a place in which the appeal from another human being can no longer make itself heard. Besides, he had even derived pleasure and joy from killing the German. As if in a mocking query to his hypocritical reader, and particularly to the intellectual who judges others by the purest standards, Bellow asks:

You would call it a dark action? On the contrary, it was also a bright one. It was mainly bright. When he fired his gun, Sammler, himself nearly a corpse, burst into life. Freezing in Zamosht Forest, he had often dreamed of being near a fire. Well, this was more sumptuous than fire. His heart felt lined with brilliant, rapturous satin. To kill the man and to kill him without pity, for he was dispensed from pity. There was a flash, a blot of fiery white. When he shot again it was less to make sure of the man

than to try again for that bliss. To drink more flames. He would have thanked God for this opportunity. (144)

Except that since the escape from the death camp, and for many years afterward, God did not exist for him. There had been, in the forest, no judge but himself and no judgment but his own. He had made the terrible discovery that there could be a certain bright ecstasy in killing.

His experience of the Holocaust is the chief determinant of Sammler's subsequent life, because it has been the ultimate reality of twentieth-century life. This seems to be recognized implicitly by all the characters, even the foolish ones, in the novel, who consult him as a wizard, someone who has been twice excused from death, "sent back again to the end of the line," (277) because he might be able to distill for others, "in a Testament" (117) the essence of experience. The students at Columbia have "a passion to be *real*." But Sammler knows better than they that "*real* was also brutal." (47) "When had things seemed real, true? In Poland when blinded, in Zamosht when freezing, in the tomb when hungry." (251) When Sammler condemns the blood-lust of modern literary intellectuals who think they can discover their souls and establish their identity through violence, he speaks from the deep authority of his own experience. ". . . His historical significance for Gruner was considerable . . . his *experiences* were respected. The war. Holocaust. Suffering." (81) *He* was the man, *he* suffered, *he* was there. "His life had nearly been taken. He had seen life taken. He had taken it himself." (148) Intellectuals who scribble their contemporaries into wars and revolutions have forgotten the difference between words and actions, precisely because they have lost faith in words. Of such men as Sartre, Sammler asks, " 'When they begin to call for blood, and advocate terror, or proclaim a general egg-breaking to make a great historical omelet, do they know what they are calling for?' " (216-7)

Sammler is anything but smug about what he has "learned" from his terrible experiences. Before being thrown into the mass grave of the death camp, he had been struck in the eye by a gun butt and blinded in that eye. Forever after, he is a one-eyed man, and he seems to recognize the drawbacks as well as the blessings of that condition. " 'Of course, since Poland, nineteen thirty-nine, my judgments are different. Altered. Like my eyesight.' " (214) John Stuart Mill once said, speaking figuratively, that he had "a large tolerance for one-eyed men, provided their one eye is a penetrating one: if they saw more, they probably would not see so keenly. . . ." ³ Sammler suspects that he has been preserved for the completion of some unfinished business, and that, in some way, that business is connected with what he has experienced and perhaps learned in the death camps. And yet what a travesty of the idea of providence to

3. "Bentham," in *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, ed. F. R. Leavis (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p. 65.

suppose that the Great Blunderer who manages the universe must use such devices to teach! It is once again the case of Charles Lamb's Chinaman burning down the house to learn how to roast the pig.

Oh merciless! Thank you, no, no! I did not want to fall into the Grand Canyon. Nice not to have died? Nicer not to have fallen in. Too many inside things were ruptured. To some people, true enough, experience seemed wealth. Misery worth a lot. Horror a fortune. Yes. But I never wanted such riches. (145)

Want them or not, however, he has them; and if the experience has blinded him to certain possibilities of human life, to the possibilities of new worlds and fresh beginnings, the intensity of his partial vision has enabled him to penetrate to a level of reality that will forever remain hidden from the new generation of "bohemian adolescents, narcotized, beflowered, and 'whole.'" (185)

Sammler recognizes that the human mind, if it is ever to rise into the skies and conquer new worlds, must begin with the resolve to stoop to the horrors which already exist and see the very worst of them in all their stubborn permanence. This is why he is impelled to go to Israel in 1967 when it lies under threat of annihilation by a host of encircling Arab armies. Sammler has not only seen, but experienced it, all before: "... for the second time in twenty-five years the same people were threatened by extermination: the so-called powers letting things drift toward disaster; men armed for a massacre." (146)

In such circumstances, Sammler "could not sit in New York reading the world press." He gets himself an assignment as a journalist so that he may be *there*, in Israel, "to send reports, to do something, perhaps to die in the massacre." (147) This reaction by Sammler, who is no Zionist and has not been much of a Jew either, will remind readers of the novel of the reaction of many Jews at the time of the June war who felt that there, at last, was their opportunity to atone for having sipped tea in Manhattan while a third of their brethren were being murdered at Auschwitz, Belsen, and Buchenwald. This time, at least, they would not be found wanting, or absent from the scene altogether. This impression of Sammler's action as one of belated and very awkward identification with his murdered people is reenforced by the picture we get of him wandering with the armies on three fronts, "at the age of seventy-two on battlegrounds, wearing these shoes and a seersucker jacket and soiled white cap from Kresge's." (146) But the comic impression is misleading in the extreme. Sammler has not only been on battlegrounds before, but was himself among the murdered of Auschwitz, Belsen, and Buchenwald. We are told of his machinations to obtain a press pass that "All Sammler really wanted was credentials. . . ." The irony here is that it is not Sammler, but Bellow, his creator, who wants credentials. A glance at the dust-jacket of the novel informs us that "During the 1967 Arab-Israeli

conflict, Mr. Bellow was a special correspondent for *Newsday*." It is Bellow who is in this novel trying to appropriate his Jewish hero's credentials, and doing so in a severe and conscientious way.

Saul Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man* (1944), was set in 1942-43 and had as its hero a young man awaiting his induction into the army. He has been working on biographical essays about the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Of the terrible carnage taking place on the continent of Europe, his chief thought is that

we have easily accustomed ourselves to slaughter. We are all, after some fashion, the beneficiaries of that slaughter and yet we have small pity for the victims. . . . We do not flinch at seeing all these lives struck out; nor would those who were killed have suffered any more for us, if we, not they, had been the victims. I do not like to think what we are governed by. . . . It is not easy work, and it is not safe. Its kindest revelation is that our senses and our imaginations are somehow incompetent. (83)

Writing a quarter of a century later, Bellow has tried to narrow the distance measured by those pronouns of 1944—"we" the spectators and "they" the victims—and to imagine the unimaginable. For unlike those belles-lettistic revolutionists so often condemned by Sammler, Bellow has not lost his faith in words; and he therefore tries to bring his feelings as near as words can ever bring them to the feelings of those who actually experienced the Holocaust, and, at times, as in the record of Sammler's experience in Israel, even to identify his feelings with theirs. No more than the great poets does Bellow presume to enter the underworld without a guide; and like them he makes his voyage there, not to gather evidence that life on earth is doomed and that man should get rid of himself, but that he acquire the capacity to see life as it really is. "The best, I have found, is to be disinterested. Not as misanthropes dissociate themselves, by judging, but by not judging. By willing as God wills." (239)

Bellow's attempt to appropriate Sammler's "credentials" and experience is his attempt to link himself both to those who died in the camps and to those who survived them. Sammler experienced fully as much as those who died in the mass grave; but he survived them. It is as if Bellow is asking what those who were the victims of the most bestial crimes that have ever been committed by men would say about man and about human life if they could be resurrected. Characters in the novel ask Sammler the same question because he *has* been resurrected. Some of them sense that if a Sammler can affirm life and the human bond, then no-body has earned the right to deny them. Sammler considers it no virtue on his part to have survived—yet his survival strikes him as preternaturally strange, exceptional. What, after all, had made him scratch through tons of dirt, push aside dozens of corpses, rise from the grave choked with blood, and crawl on his belly, like the basest of God's creatures, to escape his executioners?

The question is not an idle or academic one. Bellow is almost cer-

tainly aware of the prominence in the literature of the concentration camps of accounts of victims who managed to escape from the mass graves only to crawl back. Elie Wiesel has reported the case of

the woman who naked and wounded, had managed to escape from the ditch, the mass grave in which all the Jews of her town were mowed down by German machine guns. That woman returned to the ditch after a little while to rejoin the phantasmagoric community of corpses. Miraculously saved, she still could not accept a life which in her eyes had become impure.⁴

A similar story was told by a witness at the Frankfurt trial of the Auschwitz guards:

I once walked through a barrack filled with corpses, all of them stripped. Then I saw something moving between the corpses [and that something wasn't nude]. It was a young girl. I pulled her to the outside and said: "Who are you?" She said she was a Greek Jewess from Salonika. "How long have you been here?" "I don't know." "Why are you here?" And she answered: "I can no longer live with the ones alive. I prefer to be with the dead." I gave her a piece of bread. By nightfall she was dead.⁵

Why, then, did Sammler choose to defy the wish of his executioners and rejoin the living?

The answer to this question comes as the conclusion to what may be called Sammler's great aria of the novel, his confession of faith delivered to Shula, Margotte, and Dr. Lal. They have insisted upon hearing his "views" on life in general. Skeptical, as always, of "explanations," he instead tells a story about a particular form of Nazi cruelty in order to express his idea of modern history. The story is of Chaim Rumkowski, "the mad Jewish King of Lodz." This failed businessman, "'a noisy individual, corrupt, director of an orphanage, a fund-raiser, a bad actor, a distasteful fun-figure in the Jewish community,'" (234) was installed by the Nazis as *Judenältester* (senior Jew) of the ghetto. While the Nazis proceeded with their customary activities, Rumkowski was enabled to flourish as a King. He had his court, printed money and stamps carrying his picture, royal robes, pageants and plays in his honor; and he enforced a reign of terror over his own people: "'A parody of the thing—a mad Jewish King presiding over the death of half a million people.'" (235)

The Nazis used Rumkowski in this way primarily because humor lightened the horror of their work and it pleased them to degrade the Jews further by playing on the well-known desire of certain Jews to become distinguished "individuals" in non-Jewish society. Sammler uses the true story of Rumkowski, who confessed the inadequacy of his theatrically-assumed self by stepping voluntarily into the train for Auschwitz, in order to show the desperate failure of the post-Enlightenment

4. "Eichmann's Victims and the Unheard Testimony," *Commentary*, December 1961.

5. Bernd Naumann, *Auschwitz* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 132. This example and the previous one are cited in Irving Halperin, *Messengers from the Dead* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 16-17.

liberation of men into individuality. Ever since all men were urged to "find" themselves, most have, in fact, lost themselves, and, in consequence, taken to play-acting. People have become so indifferent to the truth that " 'individualism is of no interest whatever if it does not extend truth,' " (238) that we end with the cruel exploitation of this modern weakness by the Nazis and the disgusting travesty of Rumkowski—" 'King of rags and shit, . . . ruler of corpses.' " (236)

Sammler's choice of this debased and brutalized Jewish example as the extreme version of the hopeless search for a noble individuality is a striking insight into the link between anti-Semitism and the psychic development of post-Enlightenment Europe. He is saying that once equality was declared, individuals and groups became more unequal than they had ever been before because it was more difficult to understand and explain why, with equal conditions, differences should exist between people. This was especially the case with the Jews, who first gained equality with the triumph of the French Revolution, and yet continued to be "different" from the rest of society. As a consequence, those Jews who did enter Gentile society—whether as pariahs or as parvenus—were looked upon as actors, admitted and admired, yet denied and feared. Enlightened Europe had opened society's doors to certain Jews, but by the Nazi era, " 'the door had been shut against these Jews; they belonged to the category written off.' " Sammler sees in this last theatrical refinement of Nazi sadism the expression of the European's disillusionment with the impossible burden placed on him by the injunction to individuality.

Now that most forms of personal, individual existence have been discredited, says Sammler, people begin to wonder why they were born and what they are doing here, and even long for nonbeing. " 'Why should they be human?' " (238) In such a time and such a mood, men contemplate apocalyptic answers because they know that mankind " 'cannot get rid of itself except by an act of universal self-destruction.' " (239) But Sammler, who has come closer to experiencing death and rebirth than any man, knows that the real answer lies not in death and rebirth but in survival and recovery.⁷ He climbed out of the mass grave, not to change life or to emerge into a new self, but because man

"has something in him which he feels it important to continue. Something that deserves to go on. It is something that has to go on, and we all know it. The spirit feels cheated, outraged, defiled, corrupted, fragmented, injured. Still it knows what it knows, and the knowledge cannot be gotten rid of." (239)

If Sammler is still attached to life, and recognizes an implicit morality in the will to live on what seems this worst of all possible planets, it is be-

6. Hannah Arendt, "Antisemitism": Part One of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1951), pp. 67-68.

7. This point has been very effectively made, with respect to Bellow's earlier novels, by J. C. Levenson, "Bellow's Dangling Men," *Critique*, III (Summer, 1960), p. 5.

cause he knows what death is. What he says literally of the Polish cemetery-keeper who hid him in the mausoleum is also metaphorically true: "By opening the tomb to me, he let me live." (233)

Bellow has always been resistant to the luxury of apocalyptic emotion, thought, and utterance. He has always been like the beggar who is described at a party in *The Victim* (1947):

"They tell a story about a little town in the old country. It was out of the way, in a valley, so the Jews were afraid the Messiah would come and miss them, and they built a high tower and hired one of the town beggars to sit in it all day long. A friend of his meets this beggar and he says, 'How do you like your job, Baruch?' So he says, 'It doesn't pay much, but I think it's steady work.'" (253-54)

Sammler has plenty of cause to despair of life in New York and to hope for a Phoenix-consummation of it all. "' . . . It is in the air now that things are falling apart, and I am affected by it.'" Yet he "'always hated people who declared that it was the end. What did they know about the end? From personal experience, from the grave if I may say so, I knew something about it.'" (307-8) If there is any lesson to be learned from the tragic history of the Holocaust, it is not that we are through on this planet and must seek to establish virtue and justice elsewhere; not that life, as we know it, must be consumed in fire and reborn from ashes; and not that the corruption which is modern civilization has enabled modern men to escape from their old knowledge of the difference between good and evil. Sammler knows from experience that chaos is not the first step towards construction of a new cosmos, and that a just social order is probably unattainable. "'Perhaps,'" he muses, "'the best is to have some order within oneself.'" (231-2) Cultivate your own garden and try to bring some order into your own corner of the world—that is old advice, he knows, and distinctly unappealing in apocalyptic times. "'A few may comprehend that it is the strength to do one's duty daily and promptly that makes saints and heroes. Not many. Most have fantasies of vaulting into higher states, . . .'" (97) If justice does not reign on this planet, the failure is one of will and not of ignorance, for every man, from Cain to Eichmann, has known the difference between a just and an unjust act, and if duty is the stupidest virtue—Dr. Lal calls it hateful and painful—it is also the most indispensable.

Sammler's last speech of the book is a prayer for the soul of his nephew, Elya Gruner, who has just died of a hemorrhage. Although Elya has participated in much of the corruption which characterizes life in the modern American city—he has done favors for the Mafia, performed abortions—he has also met the terms of his contract. With a defiant final flourish Sammler and Bellow celebrate the ancient idea that virtue has a contractual basis, that between man and God there exist the clear terms of a reciprocal agreement: "The terms which, in his inmost heart, each

man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it—that we all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know.” (316) It was out of the fullness of his knowledge of this contract that Sammler had been able to affirm, with the Psalmist, in the darkest hour of his life: “I shall not die, but live.”

But, many readers will ask, if Sammler’s experience entitles him to make this affirmation, does Bellow’s? Sammler, after all, is his creation, and Bellow himself had no experience whatever of the concentration camps and death factories. How authoritative can the imagined life of a fictional creation be about actual historical events? The problem is by no means a new one. It was troubling Wordsworth when he said that the poet, in order to overcome the “slavish and mechanical” situation of those who only imitate what others act and suffer, was compelled “for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs. . . .”⁸ Dickens was addressing the same problem when he claimed, in his Preface to *A Tale of Two Cities*, “I have so far verified what is done and suffered in these pages, as that I have certainly done and suffered it all myself.”

If we are unwilling to grant to Bellow the authority that we usually allow Dickens to derive from a suffering he did not actually experience, it is because we sense that what happened in the death factories is so different from anything else in human history that it cannot be merely imagined. This is true; and yet it is precisely because the camps were unique and unimaginable that eyewitness accounts of them by survivors contribute even less to understanding than do profoundly imagined recreations. In the former, the writer is so keenly aware of the chasm which separates his world from the world of which he writes that the events he describes are now as incredible to him as to anybody else, and tend to paralyze both thought and imagination. The authority of Sammler’s experience validates, but is also validated by, Bellow’s imagination just because, to cite Hannah Arendt once more,

There are no parallels to life in the concentration camps. Its horror can never be fully embraced by the imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death. It can never be fully reported for the very reason that the survivor returns to the world of the living, which makes it impossible for him to believe fully in his own past experiences. It is as though he had a story to tell of another planet. . . .⁹

8. Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

9. “Totalitarianism,” Part Three of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 142.

The Art of Elie Wiesel

FREDERICK GARBER

FOUR PAGES INTO *Night*, ELIE WIESEL'S FIRST book, the first witness returns. It is Moché, the beadle, expelled early from Sighet because he was a foreign Jew and now somehow come back from the beginnings of Hell. It is not yet fully night. Moché, wanting to talk, finds only incredulous hearers and withdraws into himself, choosing silent death. What he knows separates him from others, and his role as remnant separates him from what he has seen. Moché is Wiesel's paradigm for the survivor tossed out of moral time, loosed from all relations with value, or, at least, shuddering at those relations that are left. All of Wiesel's survivors follow this pattern, in the present but not really part of it, separated as the Prophets were separated, by special knowledge; but without the Prophets' full sense of where they were, who they were talking to, and why. Yet this latest version of the Jewish survivor wants to be a witness and turn his knowing into the most humane forms of speech. After all, *he* is the place where past and present meet, however ambiguous his relations to either. The art of the witness, then, cannot be separated from his situation: temporal and moral location are not distinct and may well be identical. The artist's struggle for a mode of speech is the man's struggle for (first) a location in which to endure and (then) the continuation of a life. And as he finds new shapes of moral time he finds shapes for his imagination as well, for the success of one is simply the success of the other.

The situation of the survivor immediately out of the camps is, in effect, a continuation of his situation within them. For these, and for all Jews (in particular but not exclusively), the awareness of history, of the time leading up to the moment in which one stands, is tied deeply into the perception of values, how other Jews before them have lived with God and with each other. Jewishness is in part, and for some, primarily, defined by a certain relationship to history, which teaches Jewish survival and, also, the values which had made that survival both possible and meaningful. For those dropped into the camps the past had not been (or ought not to have been) merely a subject of nostalgia, but an instrument of knowledge which leads to present action, a source for the comprehension of present being and all that it can do. No slavish adherence to the past is implied—it may, in fact, be rejected or received only subliminally—but understanding, and the actions it leads to, rests for all on the awareness that one has gotten here from where other Jews

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have been, not only physically, but in their own struggles for moral perception. To cut off a sense of the past, then, is to threaten the dismemberment of the moral imagination and, therefore, the ties of all men with each other. There is no large step from an immersion in pure presentness to the cherishing of only private survival. Eliezer, the hero of Wiesel's *Night*, knew where the step would take him and knew also (with more insight than some subsequent commentators) that it was only his association with his father that held him above the muck of unendurable bestiality. When Eliezer feels that association threatened by his hunger he is terrified, largely at his own ambivalence, at what he is becoming. Sanctified by tradition, even more than by instinct, the relationship of father and son was all that time's knowledge had left as a possibility for valuable action in the immediate present. Thus, the significance of Wiesel's several variations on that theme in *Night*, not only with Eliezer, but among others who had not yet died but could not hold on as he did. The son whom Eliezer sees stealing a scrap of bread from his father and killing him in the process has made an egress from history into the timeless present, with nothing to stare at but himself and the SS in an exclusive cosmos. This is truly *anus mundi*, the zero point of experience.

The mode of *Night* is both a reflection of this state and a way of handling it, the survivor's first answer to his experience and the only way of answering immediately. *Night* should probably be seen as an early form of the non-fictional novel, in large part a memoir cleaving to Wiesel's own experience, though it is neither exactly a diary nor strictly conventional fiction. Through much of the book, Wiesel shapes his understanding of events by direct statements pointing to their occurrence and by reports of comments on them by the participants. At that level of presentation the author gets as close as possible to the bone of the material, showing more than probing, with an immediacy of statement that calls for no accounting of the facts but only the spare and direct enunciation of their circumstances. This mode of immediacy reflects exactly the imprisonment in unmitigated presentness which threatened, and sometimes captured, the prisoners. It touches the basis, the pure bottom, Hell. But, for most of *Night*, Eliezer stands above that bottom, staring at the incomprehensible and commenting, now and then, in an attempt to place it somewhere within the confines of definable experience. The point seems clear: insofar as Eliezer can brood over what has happened to him and speak about it in *some* frame of value, he is above the bestial slime, to that degree fastened to something more than brute presentness. Meaning and mode conform in a strange kind of sanity which, at one level, expresses a coldly objective stare reflecting the frozen bottom, the live double of death, and at another level ties even the unimaginable into that which can evaluate it and place it in

moral time. The art of *Night* is complex, based on a difficult interweaving of these modes, a blending which defines much of the range of meaning of the experiences in the book. There are passages in *Night* where that definition is precise and exact, articulating the unimaginable with a clarity that presses our endurance to unexpected latitudes. But since this is a difficult art it is a dangerous one as well, a precarious balance. For in order to push out a place for the unimaginable, to give it a form dictated by familiar value, Wiesel speaks at crucial moments in the only voice which the past had left to him, a kind of hasidic intensity. And that is a voice which can locate horror tellingly in moral time but can also collapse into a sad rhetoric that (unbelievably) threatens to make even *these* sights bathetic.

Wiesel's lapses of voice have been pointed out very often, as indeed they ought to be, and I shall not dwell on them extensively here. He only rarely transmutes hasidic intensity into viable art. His awareness of the problems of the witness as artist is usually more sensitive than the tools he developed for handling them, though his sense of mode is sometimes subtle enough for some stunning passages. In *Night*, the frequent collapses in tone have to be seen in the full context of the extraordinary blending of modes, for the strange and often successful shapeliness of the book was a way of starting to speak, whatever the large flaws its complexities were heir to. *Night* is the moral center of Wiesel's work, as well as of his private experience. In it is the scene of the slow hanging of a child from which his soul could only struggle upward. And in it, also, are ways of speaking which, when they succeed, contain and clarify the unspeakable and, when they falter, show his need for a speech that would control both the glories and dangers of this form of inherited passion.

Other passions, inherited or recent or frighteningly new, saturate the spirit of Elisha, the hero of Wiesel's next book, *Dawn*. This novel is both a continuation of *Night* and a companion piece to it, a step away from the camps. It leaves behind their bestial objectivity but probes the morality of the survivor's office, his strange position just outside of a Hell which, after all, he seems not to have stepped out of completely. Wiesel's sensitivity to the ambiguous placement of the survivor in moral time leads, in this book, to a fluent imposition of past and present on each other in which they are simultaneously there, mutually convergent. That interplay, as much as any other factor, freed his imagination from the lockstep of the camps' eternal present. It afforded him a form of articulation which fused the demands of history and value with the compulsions of witnessing, leading his imagination toward modes which have come to characterize all of his subsequent work, even his non-fiction.

With a sure sense for the center of survival's ambiguities, Wiesel gives the hero of *Dawn* a chance to turn moral time around, recapturing

the past by becoming all that he was not—the executioner, the mirror-image of the victim. The shift in participants ought not to have affected that strict relation of gunner and gunned whose structure transcends its instruments. The point of the shift, after all, was to carry on the camps' emphasis on survival, but to transfer Jewish aggression from the spirit to the hands and to whatever weapons they could hold. History would have to change, if not in what it said, then in what it would come to say. But in doing all this, Elisha risked that same dismemberment of the moral imagination which the SS had sought for in cutting their own Jews out of time. The Englishman facing Elisha from the other side of their relationship is as much a victim as his killer had been, but in shooting John Dawson and reversing the thrust of moral time Elisha continues that attack on his soul through which the SS had sought to detach him from the moral continuity of Jewish history. The boundaries between executioner and victim collapse, each playing the other's role as well as his own, but with the former victim even more of a casualty than he had been before. Elisha dies to his own spirit in a fusillade of moral ironies.

Yet the collapse of this boundary compels the related collapse of what had seemed to be another, forcing the shocked awareness of a presence which needed only this death to become incarnate. The long night before the dawn execution finds the murderous survivor with a gun in his hands and with his past at his back and all around him, pressing in with a crowd of faces and voices that hold all Elisha had ever known and been. In these hallucinatory passages Elisha threatens to suffocate from the congregating life of his dead past which fills the room where he awaits the moment of killing. The SS had been right after all: we are all that is behind us, the fullness of our being is a coffer crammed with the past, and whatever we do implicates all of our lives and the lives of all who had been and had made us. History converges on every moment and any action is the sum of all morality.

With this series of impingements—of executioner upon victim and all times upon now—Wiesel began to work out an organizing mode that could hold the full range of his meaning. His fictional universe started with *Dawn* and has not yet surpassed its taut combination of sparseness and density, its leanness of detail and richness of parabolic dimension. The best of Wiesel's art is here in a carryover from *Night* that avoids much of the earlier book's bathos, shifting the order of commentary from the narrator's relations to the reader into the hero's relations to himself. In that shift, most of the mawkishness which is endemic to Wiesel's work seems to have been absorbed, though his ear is such that no book of his, even *Dawn*, is ever entirely without it. Still, the pressure of hasidic intensity is under better control in *Dawn* than in any of the other novels, giving viable form to Elisha's hallucinations, which draw their moral vigor from that same magnificent passion which could dance in the Dev-

il's face. This is fiction aware of all levels of interpenetration and of the inefficacy, if not the falsity, of boundaries. What has followed in Wiesel's work has been rarely less than compulsive and articulate, compelling in its moral passion, though it has been less than fully adequate in finding for that passion a voice sufficient to the experience.

The surrealistic imposition of times on times in *Dawn* disclosed an amalgamating instinct which grew into a radical activity in Wiesel's work, a compulsion to juxtapose that drew the unseemly disparateness of things into a tentative ordering form. Juxtaposition is, whether he wills it or not, the activity of the survivor forced continually to compare what he is with where he has been: he is, himself, the haunt of disparateness. In a way, then, an art which forces together the strewn parts of a world is a healing art or, at least, a relieving one, coercing into imaginative form the mad awareness of disjunction which is likely to rock the survivor. (It is also an art with a tricky potential for sentimentalism that caught Wiesel up far too often.) The most obvious juxtaposition is the kind we have seen in *Dawn*, that look back which is also a stare at one's current spot. Wiesel begins *The Town Beyond the Wall* with a fluent version of the confusing of the far past and the intense present by a tortured prisoner left alone with all he has been, but with a horrifying awareness of numbed immediacy. Yet there is more to the juxtaposing compulsion in the novel. Versions of its plot appear in several forms in Wiesel's canon: it is the return home to an old location which has probably sloughed off little except certain past inhabitants; but it is a homecoming made by one who sees what he has come back to look at through a long tunnel filled with the thick smell of heavy smoke. The plot appears again in the return to find the *bar mizvah* watch in *One Generation After* and in the parable which Katriel tells and which reverberates all through *A Beggar in Jerusalem*. This obsessively recurrent story is a pure instance of compulsive juxtaposition, burdened with all the ironies of newly emerging forms of moral time, forcing into a new meeting an unchanging past place and an unrecognizable version of a past inhabitant. This is a rebuilding of private form, a reordering of relation, a break out from the haunted present toward the place where all haunting began.

But one cannot say that this reordering is designed as calculatedly as the rebuilding of Europe's cities; the compulsion is intense but unthought, without schedule or policy or more than the need to follow a subliminal drive. The tortured protagonist of *The Town Beyond the Wall* goes home without a meditated awareness of what he wants to see, clearing his purpose fully in his own mind only when he gets to where the impassive spectator has stared down at the square where victimhood was beginning. Nor are Wiesel's heroes entirely aware that, since they are the haunted present, the compulsion to juxtapose extends deep into

the self and takes form in a strange desire to be anything other than what one actually is. In *The Gates of the Forest* there is a remarkable series of impositions of self on self, disguises and name-changes, pretenses and role-playing. Characters fall into each other, identities merge, distinctions collapse. Gregor gives his old name away for a while, then becomes, temporarily, the deaf-mute son of an incarnation of devilish sexuality, turns into Judas for a play-scene which is one of Wiesel's better moments, and substitutes later as the husband of his dead friend's mistress. Personalities meet and flow together as the times had done in *Dawn*, all boundaries down between past and present as well as the individuality of complementary selves. Occasionally, but in a wide spectrum through all of his work, Wiesel combines these impositions of time and personality into a problematic figure who appears strangely here from somewhere equally strange, and is clearly not quite what he says he is. The meeting of the protagonist with these figures is always portentous and usually, in Wiesel's hands, ponderous and sagging with melodrama. But every stranger *can* be a messenger or even Elijah, and there is an old tale that the Messiah will come in rags, "a prince disguised as beggar."¹ All the tales are applicable to now, when all times are reordering their old relationships to each other.

The mode of *Dawn* grew, thus, through the later novels into a unique blend of the *nouveau roman*, with its flexible sense of boundaries, and traditional forms of Jewish legend, placing this most extensive instance of Jewry's various holocausts in an imaginative context that enfolds contemporaneous pain and a puzzling, stubborn eternity. Robert Alter has accurately characterized this mode as parabolic.² For Wiesel, it meant that the movement out of the timelessness of the camps, the frozen present of the dead center, went all the way to the other side of the temporal spectrum, ending in an art which binds the present into the eternal tale of all Jews, an eternity which just might be leading somewhere. This witness has moved back into history but also above it, to a level where any historic event becomes one more point in a progression which contains all that has happened to Jewry and signals with convincing probability about what lies ahead. Wiesel sees Jewish history as a whole, and any event in it as part of an allegory of Jewish existence. As in every allegory, any single event is part of a temporal sequence but is also above history, in that timeless stratum where the allegory is grasped in its totality, if not in full clarity. All Jews lead a parabolic life, and those of our time are simply our time's version of it. For the survivor, this means that our holocaust is no less than the furthest intensification of previous experience, and the inexplicable can at least be seen as part of an enigmatic whole. For the witness, it means that

1. *One Generation After* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 176.

2. See Alter's essay on Wiesel in *After the Tradition* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971).

when he speaks all previous witnesses stand around him as model and guide. For the artist, it means that narrative sequence is only a hook to hang the past on, and that no place in time is beyond immediate recall and imaginative use. All previous forms—legends, hasidic sayings, tales from the Talmud—are as relevant as the most contemporary structures, since contemporaneity is only the point where we now happen to be standing, and the juxtaposition of an old story with a slice of concentration camp life serves only to show the timeless relevance of all Jewish events. Further, material which encompasses all levels of human reality can be expressed in forms which themselves, in their variety, encompass all levels. That includes the quasi-documentary mode of an attack up the streets of old Jerusalem, a hallucinatory torture scene in an East European jail, strange meetings with enigmatic figures who may be no more than merely strange, and all those versions of a return home which seems to touch at every level of our lives though none specifically. Wiesel's art is rich in ambition and potential if not in finish. The context of any of his novels is the whole spiritual and historical context of Jewry, which means that he can draw on anything at any one time.

The narrator of *A Beggar in Jerusalem* describes himself as "expelled from time, though not from the tale,"³ that is, part of the story but not part of the flow of immediate experience. Where he is defines most exactly what he is doing. The beggar, David, is one of a cluster of others like himself, the blind and the mad, all story-tellers (the usual vocation of Wiesel's witnesses), all abstracted from the main stream of life in Jerusalem though not entirely out of it, all beyond social business and living just on the edge of allegory. This is, of course, the classic position of the chorus, peripheral participants whose comments here are ironic, cryptic and dislocated, pertinent at some level which is rarely diurnal and immediate. The book begins with the beggar commenting at a startling level of abstraction and moves out from there to end, after a long gradation, in the immediate tangibility of the sweep into the Old City of Jerusalem and the belated reassertion of Jewish rights over the Wailing Wall. More specifically, the modes move gradually but perceptibly—from the ponderous abstruseness of the beginning, through a series of symbolic portraits of beggars and madmen, down through a group of stories about the effects of Jewishness, and into the engaged reportage that is the final mode in this unusual spectrum. The move is generally toward a more persistent and extended contact with the palpability of things. But, at many levels in this descent, the narrative line is invaded by a scene or a figure from another level: characters from the daily life of Jerusalem wander into the beggars' withdrawn circles, and sometimes, as with the tale which Katriel tells in the barracks, a curious touch of parable turns up in a milieu where only the diurnal had been expected.

3. *A Beggar in Jerusalem* (New York: Avon Books, 1971), p. 13.

No level of reality is predictably safe from incursion by another, all times can collapse into now. But, most important, when the assault on the Old City finally does occur, it grows out of a context that contains all levels of being and shows all kinds of ways in which events can have meaning. In such a context no event stands unrelated or without significance. That context turns this military affair, the assault on Jerusalem, into a point in moral time, one chunk of historical experience which adds something to the parabolic significance of the whole.

One could only wish that Wiesel's taste for pyrotechnics and his ear for tone were as developed as his sense of mode or his awareness of the potential relations of event and abstraction. *A Beggar in Jerusalem* is typical in that it holds much of interest but also much that is forcedly, self-consciously significant. There are lyric passages in it imbued with an ecstasy that rings deep into the present from old histories; but the lyric can become shrill and the ecstatic gaseous. *A Beggar in Jerusalem* was a formal gamble which Wiesel lost, its spottiness of achievement symptomatic of his overall failure to sustain his occasional fine moments for more than those moments themselves. There is, thus, an instinctive appropriateness in the lineaments of his recent books, *Legends of Our Time* and *One Generation After*, both collections of short pieces in which this imagination, trained in tales and parables, taught to respond to the illimitable significance of events, can clutch briefly and tellingly at a moment of insight.

Yet one has to conclude that, however impressive his fervent struggle for form, Wiesel's talent is an insufficient one, not nearly the sustained voice which the camps have needed. Too often, critics respond to the experiences which Wiesel went through and not to the way in which he embodies them, failing to differentiate between what we are compelled to feel about the life of the survivors (we who have not been there and can only feel awe) and our distaste for the heavy-handedness which mars so much of Wiesel's work. We ought not to confuse a hungry quest for mode with imaginative accomplishment. One may choose, deliberately and understandably, to ignore the art for the experience, as David Daiches does,⁴ though it seems difficult to separate Wiesel's rendering of the material from our experience of it, since it is only through his manner of rendering it that the material reaches us at all. We are, necessarily, bystanders and can receive only what the witness gives. Yet his quest has about it a kind of passionate magnificence which even the lapses of voice cannot blur. Obsessed and driven, Wiesel has seen what had to be faced and has struggled for a form with which to face it. He draws his energy from that obsession, but rarely transforms it into that triumph of moral imagination which Auschwitz requires but has almost never received.

4. See Daiches' important review of *The Gates of the Forest* in *Commentary*, XLV (1965), 105-110.

Three Dimensions of Human Fullness: Poetry, Love and Prayer

EDWARD K. KAPLAN

HOW DO WE EXPRESS OUR RELIGIOUS IDENTITY?

What does it mean to have faith in God?—I am part of a generation which has rejected set answers to these problems. I must respond to religious perplexity as a personal dilemma, activating the resources of my inner life, my emotional and imaginative capacities, as well as my common sense. In fact, common sense has proven itself to be too common. The good thinking of American culture has bestowed upon us the Vietnam war, and with it the crumbling of any hint of national morality. Universities, those secular temples of the ideal, have revealed many of their lofty researchers as prostitutes of political power. The shallow interpersonal relationships of many of the past generation, with their neat philosophies of life, have revived an interest in a psychology of intimacy, of encounter between persons. The list is endless. This loss of trust in the authority of our culture has thrown us into an arena of individual responsibility. Creed is secondary to experience for many; and the religious situation demands that we ourselves face God.

An evaluation of our religious predicament can be derived from a crystal phrase of Abraham J. Heschel: "The self, the fellow-man and the dimension of the holy are the *three* dimensions of mature human concern."¹ I shall use these aspects of human existence to explore some possibilities of personal spiritual fulfillment, and their implications for certain policies of institutional religion. At first, these levels of human involvement could be considered on an evolutionary scale, as the path of psychological development from childhood, through adolescence into adulthood. Adolescents, not adults, for instance, are usually allowed an abundance of introspection, later to be rejected for pragmatic and immediate goals. Such exclusions are reductionistic and false. Our problem is to integrate the self with the fellow, the holy with the everyday. Official religious institutions, earlier in this century, took the term religious out of social action, or dried out the lifeblood of sacred ritual. In few synagogues or churches are theological dilemmas alive and compelling. One result is that youthful multitudes have committed their searching to more exotic forms of religious experience, those emphasizing self-exploration and imagination, or have willingly embraced purely secular

1. Abraham J. Heschel, *Man is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), p. 139; cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 225–227.

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forms of moral action. This is good and indispensable if America is to survive, morally or physically. But the very gravity of their restless searching leads me to suspect that a third dimension of commitment is lacking at both extremes. My hope is that we not expect to exclude God from the world in order to redeem it; nor must we transcend the world to save ourselves.

The following personal thoughts on poetry, love, and prayer respond to the challenge of Heschel's three dimensions of mature human concern: poetry as a fullness of self, love as a fulfillment of the inter-human, and prayer as a realization of a divine-human relation. My conviction is that all three endeavors repose upon a common ground, that of a certain sensibility which we might call poetic. This quality of the inner person is rare these days, and contrary to our outwardly oriented culture. Perhaps in integrating our emotional and intellectual responses to life we may reach that point in which our full humanity perceives its divine foundation.

One main theme flows through these tracings of my journey and lends it force: it is the *otherness* of what I seek. In religion, this category is fundamental. God, though immanent by His action in the world, is essentially transcendent. From where I stand, God's presence may be a fact or an article of faith for other people; but for me, His presence remains a mystery: God is manifest through His silence, and His absence to me provokes my yearning to contact God. What lies outside my power is *otherness*. Our aspiration to harmonize with this Other produces in us a creative tension—tension with the certitude expressed by theology and spiritual masters, and tension with the unknowable to which we aspire. The creativity of this tension is the reaching which it provokes. Let us call it a *frontier situation*: acknowledgement of our separation from a reality which activates a dynamic quest. Alienation is the beginning, not the homeland, of this odyssey.

Poetry: From Self to Love

In poetry we see an individual imagination relating to itself and to the imagination of another solitary being. By *poetry*, I mean not simple verse—the chopping of prose sentences into rimed and rhythmical sections—but a special use and experience of language: true poetry expresses emotions and values, in addition to descriptions of classified reality. The depth of poetic language is reached when connotations and intimate judgments color clear meaning with a personal presence. Words become partners and are respected and cherished for their evocative power. This is the subjectivity of poetry, the supplement to established meanings, a realm in which language and reality may be transformed by imaginative experience.

Writing poetry is fundamentally self-creation. To those of us for whom poetry is not a vocation, poetic creation is exceptional, the product of a need to express a remarkable insight or emotional drama. At a deeper level, such writing involves the confrontation of a solitary self with the hush blankness of a white page. This primordial silence before the birth of a new word may give a poet an intense sense of nothingness. In this night of the formless dream, both he and the still shaded word may emerge to daylight as a challenge to silence and utter solitude. Poetic creation, in this absolute perspective, represents a compromise with the purity of silence. But more significantly, the falterings of our pen can bring to the world of communication, of dialogue, a once hidden and remote zone of our inner universe. The poet creates himself anew, in reciprocity with the word, as his imagination receives a body.

It is more likely, however, that our poetic faculties are exercised when we read the poetry of others. Here the otherness we experience is not the strange gap between an inner truth which we already possess (though formless) and seek to communicate (even to oneself), but the secret wish of a stranger. The reading of poetry requires an empathic reaching out toward another, in an attempt to experience his or her inner event; and for this to happen we must project our living emotions into the words and images on the static page. Poetry requires us to participate profoundly in words, to remain within the created world of the page, and to explore the poet's expressed subjectivity. Such reading is a deepening of the self of the poetic reader, an enrichment of his responsiveness, and a liberation of imagination from the constraints of finite perception. Dreaming in league with another dreamer, a poetic reader achieves an individual's plenitude, for he is the center of his inner cosmos. Unchallenged by the demands of common consent, poetic experience realizes an absolute freedom of imagination as it seeks an ideal world, while at the same time creating an ideal self. In this meeting of reader and poet, though it may remain a literary illusion, one senses a tacit communication of self to self. This implicit dialogue provides a clue to deeper participation in the outer cosmos which poetry often educates.

It is a fairly common experience to see the world with heightened sensitivity after reading great literature. Nature poetry, for instance, sharpens our sense of beauty and of the divine mystery residing in the living world. And love poetry has reminded countless lonely lovers to keep their dreams alive.

Love is a bridge between the self and another; it is the impulse which explains how private inner experience can flow into commitment within a shared world. Successful reading of poetry requires an attitude of respect, or even love, for words, a capacity to dream with them, which can lead to an actual participation in their power to transform reality.

The gulf between the reader and the *otherness* of the printed words activates a tension which love of beauty nourishes. Then, dynamically transcending the stagnancy of self-satisfaction, a poetic reader commits himself to the poet beneath the words, touching his soul with fingertips of sympathy and trust. The sympathetic reader can relive in his own imagination, activating with his own emotions, the supposed original impulse of the author. This is the potential dialogue of full esthetic experience, the mutual trans-subjectivity of poetry: the harmony of two inward lives experienced within the soul of a deep reader.

Though an element of love is essential to true poetic reading, the actualization of love itself must be judged primarily in terms of interpersonal relations. Poetry most often fulfills the self, whereas human love is at least two-dimensional. Martin Buber's category of the between (*das Zwischenmenschliche*)² is one necessary touchstone of being human. Man is fulfilled only among men, in personal and social responsibility. Underlying Buber's category of the between is *otherness*, the distinctness of the two individuals engaged in dialogue or love. Love is realized not as an emotion or feeling provoked within oneself by a love object;³ this is monologue, or what is called being in love with love. Instead, a lover must confirm the dignity and autonomy of his loved one, in all of his or her independence. The tension of essential separateness renders even more exquisite the harmony I feel with my beloved. Love with this sort of realism is an opening to the world, and expansion of the self beyond narcissism, even beyond empathy (that is, filling another with one's own feelings), into social responsibility. And the dynamism of such love is a constant search for greater and deeper closeness and mutuality, while never allowing the personality of one to dissolve into the other's. Love is an attitude which refines our sensitivity to others, leading us within his or her hidden sanctuary of self, creating a partnership on which to model all moral commitment.

Full Humanity in Prayer

Elements of both love and poetry contribute to the vitality and authenticity of prayer. Just as poetry can be considered a gymnastics of love for the solitary soul, so poetry with love can transform written prayers into pathways leading beyond the self to God. Prayer may be viewed from two main perspectives: prayer grounded on the confidence of faith,

2. See Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), esp. Chaps. I, "Introductory Essay," II, "Distance and Relations," III, "Elements of the Interhuman," V, "The Word that is Spoken;" and, of course, *I and Thou*, new trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).

3. See Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 60-62 on marriage (in the essay "The Question to the Single One"); pp. 20-21 on love; pp. 28-30 on Eros (both in "Dialogue"); p. 97 for a critique of empathy (in "Education").

or without solid faith in God. The latter condition prevails today. I believe that, rather than being a threat to religion, recognition of the bitter gulf between given religious ideals and our incapacity confidently to believe them should nourish modern spiritual life. The uncertainty of religious doubt, if sustained by love of, and commitment to, the ideal potentials of faith, can renew our sense of the spiritual power of sacred words. This is what I call a "poetics of faith."⁴ If we can read prayers with love and yearning while seeking to identify ourselves with the experiences therein, we might understand more intimately what it means to live under the eyes of God.

With poetry, we know that the literary text exists; the problem is to participate with language in order to imagine the experience evoked in the poet's words. In love, we attempt to span the often intimidating abyss between two personalities; but the other remains ever so real. In contrast, prayer without firm faith can be an act without a readily accessible object. Unsure of the nature or even of the existence of God, we recite prescribed liturgical words in a void. The creative tension of such prayer lies in the intensity of our aspiration to experience directly, our need personally to confirm God's presence. But where there is no love of God, no loving hope, no fervor, the written prayer will remain a hollow shell filled with wind and an echo of our own pulsebeat. God's otherness experienced in prayer can either mean total alienation from searching (spiritual apathy or indifference), or it can foster a powerful audacity of imagination. This is where poetic sensitivity functions.

The type of prayer most available to the loving seeker is that which Heschel calls the *prayer of empathy*.⁵ Like poetry, the prayer of empathy requires a significant participation of the reader in the depth of words, a commitment of both intellect and heart to the value of the text's message. In Jewish tradition, this is called *kavannah*, a directing of one's *intention* toward God. On a literary level it is perceived as a projection of our most intimate emotions into the sacred syllables. In prayer, even the doubter can confront the faith of past generations, and juxtapose his uncertainty with the testimony to God's reality which is woven into our liturgy. The shame and embarrassment that we feel while reciting

4. See my "Toward a Poetics of Faith," *Response* (Spring, 1971), pp. 44-46, which carries forward some ideas expressed in "Poetry and Modern Judaism," *Conservative Judaism*, XXV, 1 (Fall 1970), 13-14; and "Bachelard and Buber: From Aesthetics to Religion," *JUDAISM*, 19, 4 (Fall 1970), 465-467. I have studied this problem more extensively and in a more technical manner, in "Language and Reality in Abraham J. Heschel's Philosophy of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 41, No. 1, March 1973).

5. See Abraham J. Heschel, *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), Chap. 2, "The Person and the Word," pp. 23-46, for a complete discussion of the prayer of empathy and the prayer of expression. This beautiful book is a most valuable study and luminous evocation of the intimate life of prayer—both a secondary and primary text of religious experience.

a prayer which we cannot entirely believe, when extended into an actual search for insight into God's presence, is itself a religious intuition of God's ultimate otherness. Our feeling of inadequacy is a sign of our relation to the Almighty. But in order to exercise an awareness of the holy, we cannot take sacred language only literally, that is, as an adequate description of worldly events. The poetic dimension of sacred words is their function as pointers toward an original human-divine encounter, which the prophet or psalmist attempted to inscribe in the language of man. Poetic participation in written prayers should place us in actual religious situations, enabling us to imagine the emotions of the holy authors enthralled with God. With empathic prayer, the vitality of belief locked in the dust of the ages, shunned by the literalists and archeologists of thought, is released and blossoms.

The tension between desire and belief which gives strength and tonality to the doubter's prayer is absent only in certain privileged moments when the believer's soul overflows with love of God, and he sings a pure song of thanksgiving. We see evidence of this absolute fulfillment of piety in many Psalm, and in the writings of certain exemplary people. But to most of us, these spontaneous prayers of joy and confidence, devoid of scepticism or disbelief, shine to us from the distance in the dark forest of our dreams. Nor is it consonant with the agnostic temper of our modern age to understand such vibrant faith. It must suffice us to test our own timid steps with the trodden paths of religious history and tradition. In our age, the confidence of mystical faith is a light to guide us from behind; we should not stumble on our own shadows. The faith of others, condensed in the silent song of written prayers, is a source of our love of God, and a challenge to our yearning for His presence. Facing their confidence with awe, we can unlock with love the spirit of sacred words, and across the frontier of faith reach toward Eternity.

II

The above thoughts, developed and clarified by reading, reflection and valuable conversations, are rooted in certain experiences I had during my first visit to Israel (Summer, 1968). A great wish of most Jews is to explore Jewish identity on the free and fertile proving ground of the Holy Land. My own sense of being Jewish is both cultural and religious. I had hoped that the air of Jerusalem would make me receptive to forms of traditional ritual which at that time had little life for me. At the holy places I tested my capacity to pray; this was a two dimensional problem between self and God. Equally compelling was the dimension of the interhuman. I came to Israel with a need to encounter Arabs from the recently-occupied territories, so that, from the other side, I might understand their predicament. And I was also to meet in Israel my girlfriend,

Sandy, and face a decision to marry. In retrospect, I see that the three dimensions of my concern commingled. Each specific event brought me closer to an awareness of the harmony of our inner and outer domains of action. I learned in Israel how the practice of one's humanity can strengthen a personal quest for God. The quality of my understanding of Israel was for me a barometer of spiritual maturity.

NOTES FROM ISRAEL (Summer, 1968)

Praying at the Western Wall

My attachment to Israel, like my inner assent to religious tradition, was fraught with ambiguities and confusions. My enthusiasm for a possible cultural home for Jewry was tempered by concern for the displacement of the Arabs who had lived there for many generations before 1948, and for those who were under Israeli domination after the June 1967 war. My companionship with Israel, thus, shared both anguish and poetry. The poetry of Israel is its language of history and religious observance, the sacred places where people worship and believe; the anguish, the limits of the human possible, the weakness of political and military peace. The madness of war and the cultural hatred between Israelis and Arabs gave my joy a fragile quality.

Yet, there remained in Israel an eternal poetry, a song of special intimacy between the landscape and the spectator who attempts to relive the love that the ancient people inscribed into the land. Each monument is a symbol of an intention and a holy desire which the visitor seeks to grasp inwardly. The Western Wall in Jerusalem became for me such a center of prayer, a locus where my faith was tested and strengthened.

On my first day in Jerusalem I fairly stumbled into the Old City, the Arab bazaar which seems like a long tunneled cellar. It is a maze of shops under one roof, stinking with animal dung and urine, smelling of cooking meat, seasonings and coffee; noisy with Arab music, toy sounds, and children and men selling their wares, insistent but not aggressive, always polite and welcoming. Suddenly, a little Arab boy popped up to me and asked to lead me to the Wailing Wall. I did not think it was appropriate, so I turned around and got terribly lost. I felt that meeting the Wall was an intimate journey, and I wanted to do so as spontaneously as possible.

Then I found a sign which directed visitors to the Wall. But when I arrived at the Wall I did not feel close to it, but rather embarrassed by the strange unshared fervor of the people there. The fact that I had no hat increased my isolation from those who were already praying. Instead of going directly to the Wall, I walked up the side hill and observed from above—the women on the right and the men on the left. I

strolled to the Mosque of Omar, toward the Arab music I had heard in the background. At the Mosque I was pleased by the empty space and peacefulness, so I rested and reflected upon my timid expectations of an encounter with the Wall.

On the other side of the Mosque I saw a group of young Arabs working on the pavement. One of them called out to me in excellent English. After talking with him a while I realized that he was very pro-Israeli and anti-Arab, which was disquieting, given the self-hatred such an attitude must imply. He convinced me to visit his home in an Arab Refugee Camp, which was now in Israeli occupied territory. I agreed, though I still did not trust the fellow and had a vague image of a refugee camp as a sort of prison filled with angry and screaming people. We took an Arab bus from the East Jerusalem terminal, which was a bit eerie, for I could not feel secure when surrounded by hundreds of Arab men and women in their customary dress.

As we rode the bus to Shoafat Camp, about 15 miles from Jerusalem, I saw the beauty of the countryside and the nice homes along the way, and I finally relaxed as the people on the bus took no special notice of me. My host's small home was shared with another family, each having two little rooms, and a half for a kitchen. The ten children of his family slept on the floor on mattresses. He told me that, during the June 1967 war, villagers dug holes and hid for two days, while many Jordanian and Egyptian soldiers fled in retreat through their town. He had great scorn for the Arab soldiers as fighting men. He introduced me to his twelve year old brother who sold postcards at the Mosque of Omar, and his little sister served us all some mint tea. It was pleasant but melancholy to sit in this empty home, looking out over the bare rocky hills, talking about war, Arabs and Jews, feeling the stillness of the moment, but fearing the hidden violence of the newly-occupied Arab territories. It seemed incredible that I should meet a young Arab on my first day in Jerusalem, and that he would take me to an Arab refugee camp as his guest and friend. And after sharing his hospitality and his agony as an Arab, I finally felt that I had arrived in Israel. An experience of both sides of this horrible political conflict, so deeply imbedded in the consciousness of Arabs and Jews—the contradictions of love for the land of Palestine which both peoples cherish—gave me more depth of participation in the human challenge of the Holy Land.

Soon I took the next bus back to East Jerusalem. When I returned to the city I felt ready for the Wall. I bought a sunhat and went to the prayer enclosure. It was not too crowded and everyone was doing as he pleased, just like in a Hasidic prayer-house. A good combination of fellowship and privacy prevailed, essential to Jewish prayer.

I walked toward the Wall, stood before it and started to weep. I closed my eyes and wept, swaying, trying to articulate words of prayer

in which there merged petitions for God's mercy on the Israelis, Jerusalem, the Arabs, the Palestinian refugees, the Vietnamese, Biafrans, blessings for my family, for my girlfriend, Sandy, for myself—all the while trying to find spontaneous prayer beneath my defenses and doubt. I realized that if there were any place on earth where I could cry without shame it was at the Wall. So I wept peacefully, while an Arab song drifted in from the Mosque, and the praying men chanted and swayed, and little boys with long *peot* (side-curls) ran around, playing.

I went to the Wall and put my hands to its stones. With surprise I felt their stickiness and warm moisture. I kissed the Wall with respect, as I had seen the other men do. I almost expected to receive a kiss in return, so tender and full was the kiss I gave the stone. Drawing back from the Wall itself I continued to sway and direct my mind into the rock. I imagined the heat of sadness and lamentation directed at these very stones for so many centuries, the yearning and hope poured into the hard muteness. I wondered how God could listen with such patience as His people suffered and died, slaughtered and oppressed: what desolation it must be for God to hear the muteness of the stones! Only God could hear while man remained satisfied with the silence, satisfied with the absorption of sorrow which the Wall brings to prayer—or forgot God. I was able to speak, and uttered a poem to the Wall, a statement on the stones which is now lost to my memory. Those were the only true words which sustained me in creative prayer as I sought to catch God peeking at the men who have made these stones a sanctified tomb of the human wish.

I also walked around near the Wall and listened to the prayers of others, sometimes joining in a *kaddish*. In one corner, an old man was lamenting loudly and drawing out his syllables. His words were echoed in responses: these were the reverberations of tradition and the cravings of individual faith. I understood that the Wall was not only a focal point of emotions, a corner of the universe where concentration intensifies the quality of sound. There also was something within the stones that listened. I sensed the immanence of God in the soundless testimony of the stones. The Wall: a human response with a tinge of Eternity. There is much to be said for the stones.

Engaged at the Western Wall

My contact with the Wall as a place of prayer deepened with my engagement to Sandy. We had planned to meet in Israel with this purpose in the back of our minds. Our friend, Rabbi Richard Hirsch, who was visiting Israel, agreed to improvise a ceremony for us at the Western Wall. Not to violate the separation of the sexes, we stood outside

the prayer enclosure with four friends. First, we all pronounced the *Shema Yisrael*, and Rabbi Hirsch read the beautiful “Woman of Valor” blessing from the Sabbath home ceremony: “She opens her mouth with wisdom/ And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue . . .” He then gave us a little talk based on a *midrash* about the Wall. God had assigned the building of various parts of the Temple. To the wealthy artisans and merchants he gave the North, East and South walls. They had their sections constructed with ease and speed, by hired labor. The Western Wall of the Temple God entrusted to the common people, who were poor and disorganized, and who completed their task after much toil and hardship. But God smiled upon the Western Wall and said that it, alone, would never fall; it would remain a monument to the love and dedication of the common people. Hence, our love and eventual marriage would be created with some toil and difficulties like the Wall, but, it, too would be blessed and enduring.

This homilectic analogy, though purely intellectual in structure, did however, increase my sense of companionship with the Wall, because the raw concept was vitalized with an intense emotional interest—the thought of marriage with Sandy. I understood more profoundly, more inwardly, this symbol of Jewish exile and grief, the Wall where, for centuries, Jews have wept, and gazed during many years with sad longing to the Temple grounds which were then under Jordanian control. After the Rabbi’s blessing, Sandy and I went separately to the Wall to offer individual prayers. This was one moment when I felt more familiar with the Wall, and with myself, freer and more apt to pray and give thanks, instead of bringing forth fears which inhibit real prayer. This time, my prayer had been preceded by an act of commitment, a risk and an opening of myself to another. I prayed that our love would approach our aspirations, that our faith would strengthen. And I thanked the Wall for the backdrop of eternity that it had given to our vows.

The Wall is my judge and my mirror of truth. Before the Wall my lies are thrown back to me in contempt, but my hopes are answered by the silent warmth of the stones. The tears and cries of the faithful, the curiosity of modern men to whom “faith” is an old word and the Wall a mere monument in history—yes, the Wall is alive with emotions to which it cannot respond. The Friday night dances of the pious, the special feasts and fasts, happy and grievous, man facing the truth of his being, aware or unaware of its significance: this is the Wall. It is a witness to our love. The Wall is with us, just as truth sometimes hides its face but is always there. It is a sublime concert where the entrance fee is love, and the music is that of God.

III

Analytical Postscript: Prayer and Moral Responsibility

These experiences of prayer at the Western Wall reveal the intimate interaction of poetry, love, and a yearning for God, which illustrate Heschel's three dimensions: the self, the fellow-man, and the holy. I suggest that an exercise of love mediates between these dimensions of existence.

In particular, the connection between my meeting the young Arab and my subsequent opening to the Wailing Wall offers a clue to the bond between moral awareness and genuine prayer. My problem with regard to the Wall was this: a timid and ignorant modern Jew, I faced the traditional piety of the holy places with fear of the abyss between the faith of those around me and my own questioning search for authentic experience. The Wall was like a cryptic message from the Beyond, which my heart could not at first decipher. My immediate responses to the Wall were inhibited by the Arab music, the presence of armed soldiers, the sight of Arab dwellings demolished by Israeli forces, the artificiality of my high expectations and, especially, my sense of shame at being an outsider to tradition. After spending some reflective moments at the Arab Refugee Camp, although my sense of the complexity of the situation had certainly increased, I achieved a personal breakthrough: my alienation from Arabs, caused by prejudice and political fear, was overcome by direct human contact. I realized concretely, in Israel itself, the suffering of the Palestinian Arabs, themselves caught in webs beyond personal control. The dilemma was humanized—as was I, consequently—and so I could pray. God's presence was not excluded from the Wall by a partial, biased response to Israel as a living reality. Social lucidity, and love for the universal ideals of prophetic justice opened my spirit to the Eternal foundations of the Holy Land.

My intuition of a Presence within the stones of the Wailing Wall could be seen as a projection of my emotions into the beautiful spectacle: perhaps the link between esthetic and religious experience in this case was just that inner emotional awareness. The distinction between the esthetic and religious is difficult to discern here, though the notion of eternity (time as opposed to space) is one possible criterion of religious experience. Poetic imagination was necessary to contact the feelings and thoughts which had been directed at those stones during centuries of exile. Sympathy with the desolate yearning of dispersed generations increased my receptivity to the Wall's symbolic function. This capacity to empathize imaginatively, furthermore, was opened by my fleeting, but real, communication with the young Arab and by the commitment of my life to marriage with Sandy. The risk involved in these two decisions,

though obviously different in quality, lent intensity to my final turning. The extreme importance and difficulty of those decisions challenged my full humanity, my need to love without holding back, and my response reflected that depth. Prayer came afterward as a crown, a song of freedom and growth.

The tri-dimensional quality of this inner prayer at the Wall has implications for our social commitment. My common sense, as well as my experience as a person attempting to view life with a religious conscience, leads me to hope that Jews would never pronounce the word Israel without the word Arab, and that we would pronounce it with respect and compassion. To think of Israel without Arabs would deny the humanity of those who believe deeply (correctly or wrongly, from an historical perspective) that they are presently in forced exile from Palestine, the land of their fathers. To exclude from Jewish thinking the moral dilemma of the original Palestinian refugees, and the present conditions of Arabs in Israel and in occupied territories, would reduce our Holy Land to only two dimensions, the self (the Jewish people) and history seen as divine providence; or worse, to one dimension, if Zionism is considered as a purely secular, nationalistic ideal. Military thinking is one-dimensional: the physical self, the sovereign nation, must survive at any cost. Spiritual values are irrelevant to mere survival politics. Perhaps one mission of American Jewry is to prepare a peaceful Israel through intelligent criticism and contacts with Arab moderates, rather than help extend a state of war through unquestioning support of present policies. Religious thinking demands that we imitate God's love for all humanity, and enlarge our joy of Jewish homeland by seeking fellowship and cooperation with our Arab brothers.⁶ The practical difficulty of this task is another mountain which God holds over the heads of the Jewish people.

Prayer is really the ultimate standard by which we can judge the depth and authenticity of our religious existence, for in true prayer all three dimensions of being are actualized and carried from inward commitment into action. Prayer is a paradigm for full integration in religious life. Our persistent desire for the messianic redemption of Zion should, thus, include a commitment to one's fellow-man as well as the encounter, through liturgy or spiritual insight, between self and God.

6. An important part of Martin Buber's mature life was devoted to promoting Arab-Jewish peace and cooperation. See M. Buber, *Israel and the World*, second ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), esp. pp. 227-263; and Aubrey Hodes, *Martin Buber: An Intimate Portrait* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), "Facing the Middle East," pp. 89-104. I have published elsewhere an account of other Arab contacts I had in America and in occupied Jordan and Israel: see, "Arab-Jewish Friendship Persists," *Fellowship* (magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation) (November 1969).

Peace literature can be obtained from the Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East (339 Lafayette St., New York, N.Y. 10012).

Such intimate religious experience should never remain a strictly private, inner affair. In our participation with liturgical words we can surpass esthetic sympathy as we contact a divine presence, the wish of God which is enclosed in all religious deeds (*mizvot*). Our awareness of God's presence as we do any act should guide us toward complete expressions of being human.

Education of our receptivity to God is perhaps the heart of the modern religious dilemma. Even in remoteness of belief, a quest for the ultimate must be nurtured and maintained. Rather than revising our prayer-book to reflect the flatness of modern realism, we should revive our worship by emphasizing prayers which challenge our apathy in the face of God's silence, and hold the candle of absolute faith in God's reality to the modern seeker's darkness of doubt. For without confrontation with traditional expressions of faith, Jewish religion loses its foundation, the creative vitality of conflict between generations. Sincere worship reminds us of God's vision of man, while it impels us to preserve His divine image which dwindles in catastrophe.

Social responsibility without commitment to its sacred content can also be rendered one-dimensional, selfishly provincial, simply tribalistic. An awareness of God keeps religious action religious, judged by the universal love of the prophets, whose voices echo God's will. In emphasizing the holiness of social action we shall not be satisfied with anything less than absolute truth. It is more baffling than non-theistic humanism, but less likely to remain static and neutral in nearly impossible moral binds. Our defense of divine truth depends upon a love for that potential of humanity which aspires toward an imitation of God. This arduous path may be illumined, and certainly rendered more authentic, by constant commitment to all three dimensions of human life.

Shay Hurwitz, A Pioneering Polemicist for Truth

STANLEY NASH

AUGUST, 1972 MARKS THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY of the death of Shay Ish Hurwitz, a onetime Hebraist and literary celebrity in Berlin. A tragic and misunderstood figure, Hurwitz epitomized that period of crisis for Jewish nationalism which followed the Kishinev pogrom, the Uganda proposal, and the death of Herzl. A series of sensational episodes during the decade, 1904–14, center around this hardy, controversial personality, whose career is not without significance for our problems today.

In 1904, he published his "On the Continuance of Judaism,"¹ hailed by one enthusiast as a "Copernican revolution in Hebrew literature,"² but by most of its unprecedentedly large number of respondents (over twenty) as "heresy" and "seduction to apostasy."³ In this article, and in a sequel, "Two Faiths" (1907),⁴ he rhetorically posed the option of voluntary assimilation as a very real path for Jewish intellectuals to follow; the alternative that he set forth was an immediate—almost apocalyptic and, hence, unreal—Zionist solution. Then, climactically, in 1908, his misconstrued praise of Jesus and Shabbetai Zevi⁵ led a representative of the Orthodox Zionist press, S. M. Lazar, to denounce him publicly as an agent of the Christian Mission. This libel resulted in a much publicized "trial of honor" in which Hurwitz was vindicated, but which did not quell the bizarre suspicions that such a devoted Zionist and eminently wealthy man was "a missionary for profit."⁶

These events tell us much, both about the man and his era. Shay Hurwitz was a self-styled interrogator and analyst, or "psycho-analyst" of the age. He asked if Judaism, no longer religion-centered, could with-

1. "L'She'elat Qiyyum ha-Yahadut," *Ha-Shiloah*, XIII (April, 1904), 287–303; reprinted in his *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?* (Berlin: Ahisefer, 1914), pp. 9–26.

2. Y. L. Gorelick, "Shay Ish Hurwitz," *He-Haluz* (Buenos Aires), I, No. 9 (1923), p. 12 and in his *B'Erez Nod* (Buenos Aires: Polyglota, 1964), p. 67.

3. Z. Fishman lists most of these in his bibliography of Hurwitz's works in *Ein ha-Qore*, I (1923), 98–104.

4. "Shtei Derakhim," *Ha-Shiloah*, XVI (May, 1907), 415–22 and in *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?*, pp. 27–34.

5. In "*Ha-Hasidut v'ha-Haskalah*," chaps. I–II, *Ha-Olam*, II, Nos. 4–5 (1908), 49–51, 66–68; reprinted with emendations in *He-Atid*, II (1909), 29 ff. and in *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?*, p. 181 ff.

6. See coverage of the trial in *Ha-Olam*, II, No. 20 (May, 1908), 276–80 and in *Ha-Mizpeh*, V, Nos. 20–21 (1908). See the recent study of Lazar's role in G. Kressel, *Al Ha-Mizpeh* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1969).

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stand the pressures of the general culture, if an "epidemic of conversions," like that affecting German Jewry after Moses Mendelssohn, was not then in store for enlightened Russian Jews.⁷ With his brash ultimatum that Judaism should either define its rationale for existence or else disappear, he offended virtually every type of Jewish commitment. But Hurwitz believed that ruffled reactions were a symptom of latent fears and that open debate would, at the very least, spur a healthy catharsis. At best, he hoped for a new masterwork of Jewish thought, a third "Guide for the Perplexed." For this he offered a money prize, which his enemies distorted as an incitement to betray Judaism.⁸

Concomitantly with his own remarks about primitive Christianity, Hurwitz published the first installments of Joseph Klausner's *Jesus the Nazarene* in his *He-Atid*.⁹ (Many of today's scholars remember Hurwitz primarily as editor of this exceptionally fine scholarly and publicistic journal.) It should be explained that for many writers of that period Christianity was an intriguing, if not compulsive, study. Plagued by what they termed "the Jewish Sorrow,"¹⁰ they could not easily reconcile their psychic attachment to a parochial heritage with the feeling that they were thereby neglecting their full "human" potential as expressed in universal European culture. In exploring the links between Judaism and early Christianity, they sought to escape their dilemma by demonstrating that Judaism had the seeds of this universalism within itself. When, in 1910–11, Ahad Haam attacked various pro-Christian intellectual gestures, Hurwitz led the counter-attack for "extension of the bounds."¹¹

Similarly, the entire platform of his *He-Atid* prescribed absolute freedom to experiment with ideas. He himself developed several unconventional theses: a severely negative appraisal of Yehudah Halevi, an attack on the neo-Hasidic movement in Jewish literature, a proclamation of Shabbetai Zevi's decisive role in paving the way for both the Haskalah and Zionism.¹² The pride of *He-Atid* was its 1912 symposium (first of its kind in the Hebrew press), in which, among seventeen diverse points of view, there appeared those of Eliezer ben Yehudah, Mar-

7. B. Katz, *Zikhronot* (Tel Aviv: N. Twersky, 1962), pp. 182–183, notes that the respective daughters of the three friends, Ahad Haam, Shimon Dubnow, and Mordechai ben Hillel Hacohen, each married out of the faith, as did Hurwitz's son.

8. On the prize, see "Haza-ah Sifrutit al ha-Kongress," *Ha-Zofeh*, I, Nos. 201–202 (Sept. 1903).

9. *He-Atid*, *Me'assef Sifrutit Madda-i l'Veur Inyenei ha-Yahadut v'ha-Yehudim*, vols. I–V (Berlin: "Sinai," 1908–13).

10. Hurwitz, "Ha-Zar ha-Yehudi," *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?*, p. 53 ff. See also pp. 84, 102, 158 ff.

11. L'Harhavat Ha-Gevulim," *He-Atid*, III (1911), 129 ff., and in *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?*, p. 82 ff.

12. *He-Atid*, I (1908), 47 ff., II (1909), 29 ff., 94 ff., and in *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?*, p. 123 ff., 181 ff., 259 ff.

tin Buber, Nathan Birnbaum, Shimon Dubnow, David Neumark, Max Nordau, and Naḥum Sokolow.¹³

The man who was to become such a mainstay of Berlin Hebrew cultural activity was born Shay (Sha'ul Yisrael) Ish Hurwitz near Homel, in White Russia, on the night following Yom Kippur, 1861. His family was proud of its descent from Isaiah Ish Hurwitz (1570–1630), named *SheLaH* after his mystical work, *Shnei Luḥot Ha-Berit*.¹⁴ Also, his father's maternal grandfather was Joshua Zeitlin, a disciple of the Gaon of Vilna and a maecenas to early Maskilim.

As a result of Shay Hurwitz's relatively enlightened upbringing, he did not feel the need to rebel in his youth against a rigid family and school experience,¹⁵ as did, for example, his intimate contemporary, Mikhah Josef Berditshevsky. Hurwitz's notions of a "rebel" were such more moderate refiners of Orthodoxy like Zechariah Fraenkel and Zevi Menahem Pineles. He described the historical roles of Ezra, Shimon ben Shetaḥ and Aqiva as "daring" and heroic. Even later on, when he lionized Shabbetai Zevi, he toned down this hero's apostasy. It seems that, for all his avowed rebelliousness, Hurwitz never deserved the labels applied to him. His earliest experiences marked him as a relative moderate, who remained a devout Jew, but whose provocative rhetoric stemmed from a "prophetic" compulsion to shock and, thereby, unsettle the complacency of his audience.¹⁶

In his first period (1878–93), he was the author of the first Zionist proclamation, encouraging emigration and heralding the "Messianic" role of Laurence Oliphant.¹⁷ He then worked for some years on the problem of woman's rights in Judaism, publishing articles in Smolenskin's *Ha-Shaḥar* and a book, revealingly entitled, *Hebrew Woman and Jewess*.¹⁸

The eighties were the heyday of Jewish national fervor. With typical propagandistic application of his scholarship, Hurwitz was the first to proclaim Naḥman Krokhmal "the father of Jewish nationalism."¹⁹ Afterwards, similarly nationalistic interpretations of this Galician Mas-kil became common, particularly in Ahad Haam's school. Hurwitz likewise preceded Ahad Haam in arriving at such ideas as the "cultural center," Judaism's ethical uniqueness, and a patriotic fraternity re-

13. "Al ha-Yahadut v'al Atidotehah," *He-Atid*, IV (1912), 87–208.

14. For greater biographical detail, see the article by his son, Dr. Elias Hurwitz, in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XII (1967), 85–102. "Ish" ("man of") Hurwitz refers to the Bohemian village of Horovice, where the family lived at the end of the fifteenth century. Prior to that, they trace their ancestry to Zerachiah Halevi of Gerona, a foremost Spanish rabbi of the thirteenth century.

15. See his "Memoirs" in *Ha-Shiloah* XL (1922) and *Ha-Toren*, X-XI (1923–25).

16. See, for example, *Iggerot Ahad Haam* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1956–60), IV, 321–22 and V, 24–25; M. Kleinman, "Kelappei ha-Guzma v'ha-Havvai," *Rimmon*, II (1922), 43–45.

17. "Iggeret Shalom v'Emet," *Ha-Shaḥar*, X (1882), 660–65 and *Ha-Meliz*, XVIII, No. 22 (July 1882), 438–41.

18. *Ha-Ivriyyah v'ha-Yehudiyyah* (Berdichev: Sheftel, 1891).

19. First in *Ha-Meliz*, XXV, No. 12 (1885), 185–86.

sembling Bnei Mosheh.²⁰ Equally, he anticipated the trend for “changing of values” associated with Berditchevsky, when he argued the proposition that “(The People) Israel Takes Precedence over the Torah.”²¹

After residing with his father-in-law, a Ḥabad Hasid for four years, he moved to the Ukraine, where he engaged primarily in business for nearly two decades. First, he was a certified pharmacist; then, he entered the lumber trade and banking, and accumulated great wealth. For several years he continued to write, completing a partial Hebrew translation of Hess’ Zionist classic, *Rome and Jerusalem*,²² his book on Krokhnal,²³ and a biography of a revered teacher and friend, Eliezer Zweifel.²⁴ He also edited one volume of a short-lived periodical, *Bet Eged*. However, from 1803–1903, he wrote nothing.²⁵

His work during the first period reflected all the romantic optimism and chauvinism of youth. By contrast, it was a Kohelet-like skeptic who made his dramatic return to literature, coinciding with a planned move from the Ukraine to Berlin. His “metamorphosis” is a unique case study, the opposite of more typical transformations of skeptical non-Zionists, such as Sokolow, into optimists.

Most blatant in Hurwitz’s new thinking was his sharp reversal with regard to Halevi and Maimonides. In his youth, following S. D. Luzatto, Hurwitz had made the “populist” Halevi his model nationalist hero and the “elitist” Maimonides an archetypal enemy. His mature essays, collected in his *Whence and Whither?* (Berlin: Aḥisefer, 1914) recanted these “sins of youth,” now applauding Maimonides’ greater intellectual daring.²⁷ Less well known is his detailed refutation, in the first period, of Renan’s allegation that the Jews had made no original contribution to civilization, but were merely middlemen.²⁸ After his ten-year silence, he espoused (undoubtedly as devil’s advocate) this line of anti-Jewish reasoning in questioning the Jews’ “right” to survive.²⁹ With such infuriating statements, he hoped to evoke ruthless honesty with oneself and reappraisal of even one’s most cherished heroes and clichés.

Another polemical exchange in his first period is crucial for understanding Hurwitz’s reversal. In 1893, E. L. Levinsky challenged him to

20. Articles in *Ha-Meliz*, 1882–83, and unpublished letters. See also, I. Klausner, *Mi-Katovitz ad Basel* (Jerusalem: Ha-Sifriyyah ha-Ziyyonit, 1965), I, 373.

21. Particularly in his “Sam Ḥayyim v’Sam Mavet,” *Ha-Meliz*, IX, Nos. 6, 24, 26, 37, 38 (1883).

22. Serialized, *Ha-Maggid*, XXXII–XXXIII (1888–89).

23. *Ziyyun l’Nefesh Krokhnal* (Warsaw: “Bnei Zion,” 1887).

24. *Ha-Maggid*, XXXII, Nos. 41, 43–45 (1882).

25. Except for a few emended segments of his translation of Hess in G. Brader’s *Ha-Sharon*, I (1895).

26. See for example, *Ziyyun l’Nefesh-Krokhnal*.

27. Especially “R. Yehuda Halevi” and “Ha-arakhot,” *Me-Ayin u-l’Ayin?*, p. 123 ff. and 69 ff.

28. *Ha-Meliz*, XXVIII, Nos. 149, 150, 157 (1888).

29. *Me-Ayin u-l’Ayin?*, p. 20 ff.

explain what he meant by the “light,” “spirit,” or “essence” of Torah, which allegedly underlay and superseded the *mizvot* themselves. Such quasi-scientific jargon had begun to proliferate in the nineties, and Levinsky suspected “an odor of charlatanism.”³⁰ Hurwitz was uncharacteristically silent, nor did he write anything more for a decade.³¹ He, himself, must have realized the danger of using nebulous terminology. As a most passionately committed disciple of Nahman Krokhmal, he believed that in order to survive, Jews must know what their Judaism was with “elucidated certainty” (*madda mevorar*), unobfuscated by jargon or sentiment.³² No Hebrew verb appears more in his second period work than *b-r-r*, “elucidate.”

No one was more relentless than the transformed Hurwitz in exposing the pretensions to a new, secularized theology in the respective schools of Ahad Haam and Dubnow. First, while both authors abjured supernaturalism, they presented Judaism as somehow transcendental; hence, they would establish national rebirth on an ill-defined “fetish.” They preached a “national ‘spiritualism.’” Furthermore, they relied excessively on a Darwinistically derived Jewish “instinct” or sentiment, and, each failed to “negate the *galut*.”³³ These pioneering criticisms later became Zionist stock-in-trade after Y. Klatzkin and Y. Kaufman.³⁴

In line with his demand for sober self-appraisal, another hallmark of Hurwitz’s second period was his defense of the Haskalah and the Jewish rational tradition. True to his *Mitnagged* and *Maskil* backgrounds, he opposed the neo-Hasidic revival in works by Buber, Berditchevsky, Peretz and others. He equated this tendency with *fin-de-siècle decadence*, with Nietzschean aggrandizement of the irrational and the impulsive, and with the widespread anti-intellectualism of the period.

For Hurwitz, both in his first and second phases, Judaism’s unique strength lay in its rationality and discipline. Neo-Hasidism, which he labeled the cult of “bim-bum,” idealized the opposite traits—lack of sobriety and lack of system. He found most dangerous any outlook which claimed to find mystical beauty in a condition of misery, like the Jewish ghetto, “searching for pearls in piles of garbage.”³⁵

For similar reasons, he also adjudged Yehuda Halevi a culprit from a national point of view, because this beloved folk hero had dignified suffering and “sweetened” the *galut*. From this bias, he could discount even Halevi’s Zionides and Zion-bound pilgrimage, equating these with

30. *Ha-Meliz*, XX, Nos. 17–18 (1893).

31. In his diaries he notes that he suppressed his heretical ideas out of respect for his father, who died in 1898.

32. *Ziyyun l’Nefesh Krokhmal*, p. 48; *Me-Ayin u-l’Ayin?*, p. 83 ff.

33. *Me-Ayin u-l’Ayin?*, pp. 16 ff., 29 ff., 35 ff.

34. Also, with differing emphases, A. Sharon and B. Kurzweil.

35. “Ha-Hasidut v’ha-Haskalah,” *Me-Ayin u-l’Ayin?*, p. 180 ff. See also his letter to Joseph Klausner, June 14, 1911, (Klausner Archive, Jewish National Library, Jerusalem).

pietistic peregrinations of whimsy that never reach an earthly goal.³⁶

He demanded total "negation of the *galut*," symbolized for him by Shabbetai Zevi's first attempt to break down the physical and mental walls of the ghetto. (Gershom Scholem has acknowledged Hurwitz's pioneering intuition in this regard.³⁷)

He pleaded for freedom and breadth of expression in Judaism.

If Judaism is not to be asphyxiated by the fumes of its own breath, it must keep an open corridor to the future. . . . All *aḥerim* ("heretics") of every ilk must find their berth within Judaism, for without them it will wither for want of the sap of vitality.³⁸

Hurwitz was a fructifying influence for the Hebrew renaissance through his energetic personality, his wealth, and his catalytic impact on the Hebrew press, which, while often castigating him, never ignored him during his lifetime. His richly captivating Hebrew style had much to do with this, as did, of course, his tireless passion for debate.

His isolation in the Ukraine during the First World War, the loss of his fortune and of his health, help to account for the abrupt eclipse of his fame. Aside from his brief tenure as professor of Talmudic and medieval literature, along with his cousin, Shimon Dubnow, at the Leningrad Jewish University,³⁹ his editorial work with Bialik at the *Jüdischer Verlag* in post-war Berlin, and his partially published *Memoirs*,⁴⁰ little remained of his ambitious dreams at his untimely death in 1922. The sole scholarly product of the long war years was a popular analysis of Bahya Ibn Paqudah's *Duties of the Hearts*.⁴¹ From the period before the war, two hitherto unnoticed samples of his projected publications were printed, one an introduction to *The Rebels in Israel*, the other a chapter of his revised *Early Writings*.⁴² A sixth volume of *He-Atid*, prepared by him in 1914, appeared together with the entire series, in 1926.⁴³

Among the tributes paid him, he was called "the Kohelet of Hebrew literature," "the constructive skeptic," and "the man of truth."⁴⁴ Particularly apt were Reuven Brainin's eulogistic remarks at a memorial gathering in 1922, "Frishman searched for beauty and occasionally found truth; Hurwitz searched for truth and occasionally found beauty."⁴⁵

36. *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?*, p. 123 ff.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 259 ff. See Scholem's "Mizvah ha-Ba'ah ba-Averah," *Knesset*, 1937, p. 352 and elsewhere.

38. *Me-Ayin u-l'Ayin?*, p. 84.

39. See Hurwitz's "Mikhtavim me-Arẓot ha-Zafon," *Ha-Toren*, VII, No. 50 (Mar. 18, 1921), 4-10.

40. See footnote no. 15. The manuscript of the rest of his *Memoirs* has still to be located in Israel, where it was sent for publication in 1933.

41. First in *Ha-Tequfah*, X (1921), 224 ff. and then as *Torat Hovot Ha-Levavot* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag ["Klal"], 1922).

42. Both in *He-Haver*, I (Feb. 1914) and II (May, 1914).

43. *He-Atid*, vols. I-VI, ed. E. Hurwicz (Berlin-Vienna: Hartz, 1926).

44. Respectively by Dr. Judah Bergmann, Rabbi of Berlin (at his funeral), by Yaaqov Kahan, and by Zalman Shneur.

45. Reported in *Ha-Doar*, II, No. 210 (1922).

A. D. Gordon: On Social Nationalism

ROGER E. HERST

AARON DAVID GORDON (1856–1921) HAD ALREADY departed Russia and resided in Palestine for a year when Nicholas II granted the first Russian Duma. By the time the Bolsheviks had seized control over the Revolution in November, 1917, A. D. Gordon had only three more years to live. What joins these events together is not the influence which Gordon had on the Revolution, nor, indeed, what influence it had upon him. Rather, it was the shared distrust of private property and the mutual feeling that the ills of society could not be ameliorated by anything short of a drastic alteration in the manner in which men relate to one another. But beyond this point the Russian Revolution and Gordon parted company. The former sought a transformation of society through a radical redistribution of capital wealth; the latter, a means of reviving the Jewish people through a socialization of its ancestral land in Palestine.

Though A. D. Gordon developed a love for Zionism before his departure for Erez-Yisroel in 1904, he might never have emigrated from Mihilna, Russia, had it not been that the Grünzburg Estate, on which he worked as a minor official, was sold and he lost his employment. His decision to leave his family and begin a new life as an immigrant came at a most inauspicious time. He arrived in Erez-Yisroel when the pendulum of Zionist optimism had swung back drastically from its honeymoon of 1897–1900. Theodor Herzl's grandiose political hob-nobbing had produced only vague acquiescence from the European plenipotentiaries. Palestine, itself, suffered from chronic unemployment, Turkish imperial neglect, and the lack of a coordinated Zionist program to rebuild a significant Jewish presence there. Thus, in the wake of the Kishinev Pogrom and the subsequent failures of the constitutional movements in Romanov Russia, the Zionists could no longer afford the luxury of their dreams. In 1903, the majority of the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basle agreed to send a delegation of experts to investigate a proposal for Jewish colonization of East Africa. The passion for Zion was tempered by what Max Nordau called the Uganda Scheme—the need for a *Nachtsyl*, a temporary night shelter to rescue persecuted Jews during their epic flight to Erez-Yisroel. Just when a wave of realism was sweeping through the Zionist leaders and just when America seemed the only sanctuary for the downtrodden Jewish masses, A. D. Gordon arrived in Palestine, armed with little more than his indestructible ideals. He had no money, no personal experience in agricultural work, and no literary reputation. And yet, in the succeed-

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ing seventeen years, he was to become the spiritual father of the *Halutz* (Pioneer) Movement, the symbol of its passion for physical work, and the most vociferous articulator of a Jewish revolution through ruralization, socialization and spiritual transformation.

One cannot say that Gordon was a systematic writer, for his style meanders from economic and social to historic and political observations. He was fond of stating a central theme, then enlarging upon it with ever widening circles of tangential information. At the outset of his literary career in Palestine, he tried to explain his philosophy of nationalism and work.¹ Later, he extended his organic theory of life to provide a metaphysical foundation for his earlier theses.² In retrospect, it is clear that the appeal of his philosophy of nationalism and labor dwarfed his contributions in metaphysics.

Central to Gordon's doctrine of creative nationalism is the idea that the Diaspora Jew lives, of necessity, as a parasite in a Gentile society. In the *galut* he can be none other than a marginal pariah, dependent upon the Gentile for his food, shelter and protection. In Erez-Yisroel, however, this same Jew must transform himself into a totally self-sufficient individual, able to provide all of his material and spiritual needs. What today we accept as sociological truth about life in Israel, in Gordon's time sounded unduly idealistic. In the light of the enormous difficulties which the *Hovevei-Zion* (lovers of Zion) had in establishing a meaningful standard of living in Palestine, Gordon's *Daat Ha-avodah* (Religion of Work) seemed hopelessly out of touch to any but those who labored and struggled with the resistant soil of Erez-Yisroel.

In 1912, Gordon responded to the "insults" which Ahad Ha-Am had leveled at the "Practical Zionists" for being both "impractical" and "detached" from Judaism. Answering Ahad Ha-Am's critique in *Torah M'Zion*, Gordon stated that the most esteemed author had simply misunderstood the dream of the pioneers in Palestine. While Ahad Ha-Am had a lofty ideal for Zion, the immigrants wanted nothing more than a national revival in order that they need no longer endure being parasites against their will. Gordon reminded him that members of the Yishuv desired a healthy, creative and natural existence which would evolve only through a process of trial and error (something which Ahad Ha-Am was impatient to accept). Gordon refined his sense of Jewish destiny in Palestine in a single word—"Work."³ Like the Marxists, Gordon postulated that work frees the individual rather than enslaves him, provided that this work is directed toward an elevating goal. The rebuilding of the ancestral land provides dignity for Jewish toil. The difference between

1. Aaron David Gordon, *Ha-umah v'ha-avodah* (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library, 1952).

2. Aaron David Gordon, *Ha-adam v'ha-teva* (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library, 1951).

3. Aaron David Gordon, *Mikhtavim v'reshimot* (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library, 1954), p. 44.

existence in the Diaspora and in Erez-Yisroel is that "in Erez-Yisroel the Jew does not need to take his national pulse every hour. And because of this, he is entirely healthy [normal]."⁴

After having adapted the Nietzschean doctrine of work to the redemption of the Jewish people in Erez-Yisroel, Gordon turned his attention to the relationship between man and his property. While working at Ein Ganim (near Petah Tikvah) the "old man with the gray beard" married himself to the soil he tilled. Learning from his spiritual mentor, L. N. Tolstoy, Gordon viewed man in harmony with the creative process of Nature as he produced vegetable life from the earth. With such a spiritual concept of farming, his zeal for socialization of the land in Palestine was predictable. To demonstrate his devotion, Gordon labored to establish a youth movement which would commit itself to communalism. He encouraged the members of *Hador Hazair* (The Young Generation) to learn from the example of the *Zeirei-Zion* (Zionist Youth) who, in St. Petersburg, were not ashamed to declare that the right to purchase land in Palestine ought to be restricted entirely to the *Keren Kayemet* (Jewish National Fund). Wealthy Jewish philanthopists, who at the time were purchasing private estates for leasing or for lending to Zionist settlements, were to be discouraged. All contributions to the national cause were to be channeled through the National Fund.⁵

So deeply did Gordon believe in the organic relationship between the soil and its worker that in trying to clarify the Jewish presence in Erez-Yisroel, he acknowledged the rights of the Palestinian Arab to the same territory. Forthrightly, he asks, to whom does Palestine belong?

The question is, in which sense and to what measure is it ours or theirs? And how can the claims of both sides be reconciled? The question is not simple and requires very great consideration. But one thing is possible to say for certain—that the land will be most forcefully associated with the side [Arab or Jewish] which treasures, labors and works it most! Also, it belongs to the side which will most suffer and toil for it! Logic, justice and also the nature of things demand this. And here you have again the power of work and its function in our revival and redemption (1909).⁶

While trying to recuperate from the disease which finally claimed his life, Gordon wrote to his comrades of Kibbutz Deganyah in 1921. The question of Jewish rights to Erez-Yisroel continued to plague him. It was too easy, he wrote, to believe that both the Arab and Jewish immigrants suffered from the identical malady, the exploitation of the capitalists. Jewish socialists trapped themselves into thinking that once the impoverished, persecuted Arab masses overthrew their *effendi* landlords, they would join with the Jews in common cause—to rebuild Palestine. But Gordon sagaciously pointed out that the Arabs of Palestine have all the

4. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

6. Gordon, "Pitron Lo Razionali," in *Ha-umah v'ha-avodah*, p. 96.

attributes of nationalism: distinctiveness, language and historic ties to a specific territory. They lack only their freedom. Why should they not fear the competitiveness of the Jews? Thus, once they achieve their freedom, even Jewish industry, finance and goodwill would be insufficient to solicit Arab friendship for Zionism.

Indeed, the mass of Arab workers, not any less than the *effendi* landlords, has been, are and always will be against us. And even if in the distant future the Arab [fallah] will rise up against the *effendis*—he will still be against us, as he was against the *effendis*. And the opposite is not correct.⁷

In the final analysis, both the Jews and Arabs have equally valid claims to Palestine. For Gordon, the people who best utilize the soil of Erez-Yisroel will ultimately earn the right to it. The unification of national purpose, the collectivization of the cultivatable land, and the forceful assertion of national volition—these will be the determining factors in the final possession of Palestine. Countering the prevalent ideology of the “political Zionists” in Europe, Gordon spoke for the “Practical Zionists” at the eleventh Zionist Congress in Prague, maintaining that it was not the claim of a group, faction or political party which would provide the Jews with a title to Erez-Yisroel. It was, rather, the passion of an entire people, not only demanding their historic rights, but demonstrating their determination, through physical toil, which gave substance to Jewish claims. In the final judgment, “. . . this is something which is not easily depreciated or denied!”⁸

After having established the importance of work and socialization, A. D. Gordon expatiated on his particular doctrine of nationalism. True, it was the socialization of private property which labeled Gordon as a revolutionary, but it was his indefatigable belief in the redemptive quality of nationalism which marked him for greatness in the history of Zionism. The equitable distribution of human wealth was only the first step toward a creative nationalism, one where a people tills its own land and produces its own culture. As his ideas about Jewish nationalism crystallized, Gordon found himself moving further away from *Poalei-Zion* (Workers of Zion) over the question of International Socialism. Writing to Berl Katznelson (1887–1944) in 1919, Gordon observed how *Poalei-Zion* members erred in judging the embryonic Jewish labor movement in Palestine as a branch of the Socialists’ International. The vast majority of Jewish workers were not even socialists! The attempt to identify nationalism with socialism was based on a philosophic misconception. Not only were they movements of different types but they were often contradictory!⁹

In order to clarify his quarrel with the Socialists, A. D. Gordon con-

7. Gordon, *Mikhtavim v'reshimot*, p. 149.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

9. *Idem*.

trasts the budding Yishuv with two other utopian societies: the new Bolshevik order in the Soviet Union and the *laissez faire* democracy in the United States. He claims that both the Soviet Union and the United States are examples of societies, but not of "nations." The former lacks what Gordon terms "the cosmic force," for it is a socialism with no spiritual component, but is simply a negative reaction to the debacle of Czarism, with little positive assertion of peoplehood or culture. The latter is the aggregate of a great, wealthy, active and strong people, but lacks that peculiar character which binds this myriad of peoples into a true "nation."¹⁰

For Gordon, socialism arises out of man's material needs and directs itself to the technology he develops in fulfilling his wants. Nationalism, by way of contrast, is the product of man's spirit and, consequently, is the resource of his creative dimension. He states in "*Avodateinu mei-atah*" (*Our Future Work*) (1918).

On the one hand, socialism was born out of the strength of science and technology, and, on the other, from capitalism. Let us say, it is a child in transition, passing from a form of national existence (which was part of the spirit of the Middle Ages and generally at the genesis and development of civilization in its primitive feelings, beliefs and ideas) to a newer form of national life that enlightens and enlivens simultaneously. But it is absolutely different from nationalism. For it exists entirely on technology and industry, whereas nationalism exists by life and creativity.¹¹

Though Gordon affirmed that the socialization of material wealth was requisite for the new order in Erez-Yisroel, he viewed as sterile the process of socialization without a national dimension. "In principle, socialism stands for the improvement and renewal of human life, for the amelioration of the social order. But it does not stimulate the perfection and revival of man's spirit."¹²

Socialism made its major thrust the external life, the objective forces upon life, because they, to the extent that they can be redressed, will ameliorate not only the quality of life, but mankind. But this still does not provide sufficient importance to the subjective forces acting upon men.¹³

Being a religious, but adamantly non-Orthodox, man, Gordon asserted that socialism and nationalism part company at the point where socialism fails to fortify the image of man created in the image of God. Thus, socialism has within its noble objectives the very seeds of destruction. It begins by concentrating against the exploitation of the worker. Since exploitation is universal, the socialism movement responds by internationalizing itself. In doing so it dissipates its strength, which comes from men working together in common cause to create a nation with

10. Gordon, *Ha-umah v'ha-avodah*, pp. 232-4.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

12. *Idem.*

13. *Idem.*

unique institutions and culture. Further, because socialism grows in reaction to the economic and spiritual poverty of the capitalists, its idealism is transformed into a mechanical quest after the capital which others possess. In the pursuit of economic control, socialism loses its vitality and, ultimately, abandons altogether its national direction.¹⁴

A. D. Gordon's horizon ended at the frontiers of Palestine, where he gave himself entirely to the development of the Pioneer Movement in the struggling Jewish settlements of Zion. It was the misguided sense of internationalism among the members of a newly formed *Ha-shomer ha-zair* kibbutz which drove him to take up another residence at kibbutz Deganyah in the Galilee. For a year and a half, Gordon had worked at Tel Adashim with fellow left-wing socialists. The story is told that a few days before the First of May, 1919, a comrade said at the dining table that he who would not celebrate this international holiday did not truly belong at Tel Adashim. Gordon took umbrage and, despite attempts to dissuade him, departed the kibbutz for the Galilee a few days later.¹⁵

Though Gordon did not believe that Jewish nationalism was a mere segment of a wider international revolution, he strongly advocated a personal, individual transformation of the spirit. This was reflected in his definition of *hitpashtut*, the expansion of the human personality in the direction of altruism, mutualism and identity with the creative forces of the universe. He felt, as a matter of contrast, that man might also choose to withdraw into the world of *zimzum*, where he contracts his perspective behind egoism, selfishness and personal desire.¹⁶

In his own life, Gordon attempted to flee the path of *zimzum* where men function for their own needs and pleasures, yet ironically fail in achieving them. Laboring together with his comrades and compatriots, Gordon lived his last years in the spiritual expansion of *hitpashtut*. His philosophy brought him constantly back to the soil and the people who composed his "nation." Hence, for Gordon, the dream of Zion was his program to save mankind. It provided the Jews with a means to redeem themselves through hard, creative and ennobling work!

14. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

15. Gordon, *Mikhtavim v'reshimot*, p. 110.

16. Gordon, *Ha-adam v'ha-teva*, p. 94.

Dialectic Zionism

DAVID J. SCHNALL

“THE IDEAL OF LABOR MUST BECOME THE PIVOT of our aspirations.” These were the words of the leader of the Second Aliyah, A. D. Gordon, in his *People and Labor*, written in 1911. Thus, for the past sixty years, Zionist ideology, Labor Socialism and Israeli politics have been inextricably intertwined. The result of blending one element, whose roots are founded in a national culture and tradition, with another which is based on radical idealism, and stirring with the spoon of political pragmatism must inevitably be paradoxical and highly fluid. True, indeed, of the stuff of Israeli political culture. While the full analysis of the effects of such stark contrast must await a future study, there are few better ways to treat a subject briefly than to examine the product of its logical extreme, and to make inferences therefrom. That will be the intent of this paper in its analysis of one of Israel’s most durable yet enigmatic figures, the recently deceased Dr. Moshe Sneh, Member of Knesset, and Chairman of Israel’s original Communist Party, Maki (*Miflet Kommunistim Yisraelim*).

It has been claimed that had Sneh chosen the more traditional and accepted path of political activity, i.e., through one of the major centrist parties, he could well have been Prime Minister. Without being overly deterministic, it may be argued that such a course would have been at odds with the inherently contradictory nature of his political philosophy. He was a secularist who regretted his alienation from traditional Judaism, an international Marxist-Socialist with staunch nationalist feelings, an ideologue with a profound understanding of tactical politics. It is hoped that by tracing the political thought of Dr. Sneh since the founding of the State, and presenting a systematic treatment of his views on Israel’s position vis-à-vis the Arab States, a clearer understanding of the paradoxes which inhere in Zionist ideology, as well as in Israeli socio-political life, will emerge. Prior to such an analysis, however, it would be well to look at the Israeli political system, in order that these elements may be more fully understood in the perspective of their environment.

Though political labels such as “right” and “left” are often convenient and descriptive, they must be used cautiously when referring to Israeli politics. Within the economic realm, almost all Israeli political leaders are “leftist” to the extent that this term refers to collective action and to government involvement in the economy. Though represent-

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ing only a small percentage of the population, the basis of the agricultural system is collective (the Kibbutz or Moshav) and even the most traditional segment of the political spectrum, the strictly religious Poalei Agudat Yisrael Party, maintains such agricultural settlements (Kibbutz Hafez Hayyim, and Kibbutz Sha'alvim). Another indication of this generally "leftist" economic orientation can be seen from the campaign position of the Gaḥal coalition—the one party which most closely resembles a continental-liberal political philosophy, i.e., "right-wing." During the 1969 election, Gaḥal called only for increased individual ownership, but never questioned the need or legitimacy of collective agriculture, or government intervention in the economy.¹

In the area of foreign affairs, the same thing is true, but in reverse. Here, there are a few true "doves" and a "liberal" or "soft" position is a relative one. In the words of one analyst, the breadth of the "hawk-dove" continuum in Israel can be measured only in terms of

a continuation of the old debate in Israel which has existed ever since the establishment of the State, between the two conflicting schools of Jewish opinion: those who think that a settlement with maximum conditions should be imposed on the Arabs, and those who feel it necessary to make concessions as the price of peace.²

One might add that the territorial status quo, security, and the genuine mistrust of the Arab states play as much a role as do history and ideological commitment.

Finally, there is a structural element in Israeli politics which sets it apart from the American, Canadian or British systems, and which requires understanding. Israeli parliamentary government, like the continental democracies, is based upon proportional representation. Thus, the Israeli party system is ideological, well-organized, centralized and politically supreme. In a system in which the electorate votes, not for the candidate, but for the philosophy which the party represents, this is as it must be. The result, however, is that the individual politico hardly exists beyond his party label. Moreover, minuscule factions and splinter groups are thus permitted parliamentary inclusion, for the constituency is a national one and seats are allotted on the basis of the national vote. This in turn permits Knesset members to speak in national terms and factional leaders to attempt to draw support from any corner, in the hope of garnering a sufficient number of votes to gain a seat. With these qualifications in mind, an historical-analytical outline of Sneh's role within Maki can be attempted.

Sneh's early political career was inconsistent and haphazard. After serving as leader of the Jewish Palestinian Military Force (the famed

1. D. Peretz, "Israel's 1969 Election Issues," *Middle East Journal*, Winter, 1970, p. 32.
2. E. Rouleau, "Hawks and Doves in Israel's Foreign Policy," *World Today*, December, 1968, p. 503.

Haganah) he became a left-wing member of Mapam which, in its early period, was a Marxist radical party

in sharp opposition to the Comintern on the Zionist issue and critical of the pact with Hitler...

It was Sneh's hope that the Communists (Maki, as of October, 1948) would gain power in Mapam and the acceptance of the Soviet Union. But the Soviet and Czech trials of 1952 (Slansky and the "doctors' plot") in which the "cosmopolitans" were implicated, created a controversy within Mapam, and Sneh was called upon to disassociate himself from the Soviet line. He countered with a demand for complete identification with the U.S.S.R. Evidently, his internationalism and his Marxist commitment took precedence over his Zionist feelings and political acumen. By contrast, Mapam reacted in a more nationalist manner, no doubt influenced by the strong anti-Soviet feeling being expressed in Israel at the time. On February 9, 1953, the Soviet Embassy in Tel-Aviv was bombed and three days later the U.S.S.R. broke relations with Israel. They were not restored until July 20. Mapam, bent on becoming a major socialist-centrist party, found it expedient to ignore the "world socialist leader" i.e., the U.S.S.R., and steer an independent path.

This same political equation played a major role in Sneh's realization that Mapam would never be the Soviet's choice for Israeli proletarian leadership. He accused Mapam of revisionism, thereby trading expedience for doctrinal purity, and joined Maki late in 1954.³

Seen in another light, Sneh's actions, though perhaps naive, may also have been motivated by a latent nationalism. Convinced of the colonial-reactionary intentions of the Western powers, he could not tolerate the pro-Western leanings of the Israeli political establishment. Had not the British been the major obstacles to achieving independence? How could reparations and financial aid be accepted from West Germany? Would blood money absolve those whose land still seethed with the remains of European Jewry? Clearly, Communism was the wave of the future, and the best interests of a fledgling state could only be identification with the Soviet Union, especially considering the animosity evident in the Third World vis-à-vis the West, and Khrushchev's avowal, as of the Twentieth Party Conference of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. in 1956, to work closely with "non-committed" nations. Thus, in Sneh's mind, Zionist Nationalism and Labor Socialism could be neatly wed.

But the political environment would not permit an outright proclamation of this sort, especially in the light of the Egyptian military-trade agreement with Czechoslovakia—acting as an agent for the Soviet Union in 1955—as well as the Soviet intervention on behalf of the Arab States

3. W. Z. Laqueur, *Communism in the Middle East* (New York: Praeger, 1956), pp. 73-119.

in the Suez Crisis of 1956. It should be added that Israel's allies in this venture were England and France. Political expedience, the third element in the Israeli political admixture, required that Sneh strike a neutralist pose in the following years, particularly on issues of security, Arab Relations and the Soviet Union. Thus he argued:

The source of the [conflict] lies in the refusal of each side to recognize the rights of the other—in the refusal by Israel's rulers to legitimate the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and in the refusal by the Arab leaders to legitimate the State of Israel and its rights.⁴

Yet Sneh was walking an ideological tightrope, and he found it necessary to couch any implied criticism of Arab leaders in careful language. For example, before even a mild rebuke of Gamal Nasser's anti-Israeli policy, Sneh denounced the "warlike, imperialist" foreign policy stance being employed by the Israeli Government.⁵ Further, both because of the imperatives of the class-struggle, as well as the uncomfortable political position Sneh found himself in, Maki tended to emphasize domestic issues, on which it held a predictably Communist-Marxist line. This included opposition to any reliance on capitalist aid—especially from the United States or West Germany—and support of nationalization of industry, higher wages, and protection of Israeli Arab rights.⁶

1965 was a year of great importance for Maki, for it was then that the inherent paradoxes earlier discussed became most visible. From its birth and until 1965, Maki had, for obvious reasons, a traditionally minute constituency among Jewish Israelis. It was therefore easy for it to support Arab grievances and to gain its greatest support in the Arab town of Nazareth. Those who supported Maki did so from no great ideological commitment. Rather, prior to 1965, Maki served as the sole non-establishment party to which the Israeli Arab could turn. On the eve of the national elections of 1965, however, Maki split with the U.S.S.R.—ostensibly over the appraisal of the various Arab regimes—and experienced, in turn, an internal rift of its own. Almost all of its Jewish members remained loyal to the Maki line, while most of the Arab members continued to support the Soviet Union and formed the New Communist List, Rakah (*Reshimat Kommunisti Haḥdashah*). Rakah now represented a more suitable affiliation for Maki's Arab constituents and thus greatly diminished Maki's electoral strength. Indeed, the 1965 election returns indicate that Rakah polled twice the votes that Maki did and was awarded three seats, while Maki's sole deputy was its then leader, Shimon Mikunis.⁷

4. *Kol Ha'am*, 1/17/65.

5. *Kol Ha'am*, 3/12/65.

6. S. W. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. 292.

7. The exact figures for the 1965 Parliamentary elections were 27,413 for Rakah and 13,617 for Maki. For a brief analysis of the rift at this stage, see: "The Struggle Within the Israeli Party," *The New Middle East*, August, 1969, p. 16.

In response to its internal difficulties, and just prior to its actual rupture, Maki published, in the party organ, *Kol Ha'am*, two sets of interpretations of the 15th Congress of the I.C.P. which had been held in late 1964. It is at this point that a systematic political ideology, attributable to Sneh, was articulated. It must be remembered that in those early days of the split, Sneh still had hopes of maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union. This may well have tempered his rhetoric. Thus, in opposing Arab propaganda, he argued:

It is incumbent upon us to take a forthright stand against every manifestation of disregard for the rights of Israel, regardless of its source. [Nevertheless] our opposition to Arab chauvinism will not result in any slackening of our principal struggle which is against anti-Arab chauvinism [primarily in Israel] and against stated Israeli policy.⁸

Interestingly, in the very same periodical, the Arab wing also opposed "Arab chauvinism" when it stated:

We have taken exception to, and we have condemned, the aid that is being supplied . . . to the Palestine Liberation Army, since we consider their goals to be a rejection of Israel's right to exist.⁹

The primary contrast existed in the proper perspective toward the Middle East conflict. The Arab wing argued that those who explained the conflict in terms of two competing nationalisms, each equal and legitimate, were playing into the hands of the imperialists. Sneh meanwhile emphasized that imperialist states were not the only ones to begin wars. Indeed, he continued, while Israeli "lackeys" were the principal threats to peace, it was naive to assume that they represented the only threat.¹⁰

Apparently, Sneh despaired of maintaining his Arab constituents and hoped to continue his neutralist course—though he may still have hoped to restore faith with the Soviet Union. From both tactical and nationalist motivations he recognized that his value to the Soviet Union was predicated upon his ability to marshall support among Jewish Israelis, for the U.S.S.R. already had sufficient Arab support. He argued correctly:

A total identification by Maki with the anti-imperialist Arab rulers . . . would drive a wedge between our party and the people of Israel.¹¹

It is not unlikely, as well, that the rift within the party, at least in its early stages, focused more on tactics than on substance. Sneh may have viewed the future of the party in terms of its Jewish constituents, hoping to convert as many as possible, and to remain as relevant to them as Marxist ideology would permit. The Arab wing, by contrast, may have looked, rather, to the Arab Israelis for votes, and adopted a more radical line.

8. *Kol Ha'am*, 5/19/65.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Kol Ha'am*, 2/19/65.

From its own perspective, the Soviet Union would have preferred a unified, cohesive party organization in Israel. In attempts at reconciliation, the C.P.S.U. invited both Maki and Rakah to send delegations to the Party's 23rd Congress. Yet there could be no doubt that the Rakah line much more closely approximated Soviet Middle Eastern policy. In any event, this phase of dual Soviet recognition was only transitory in nature. In June of 1967, Sneħ clearly opted for nationalism and Maki broke entirely with the Soviet Union and supported the Israeli position. The U.S.S.R., in turn, declared Rakah to be the only representative of the Palestinian people—assumedly both Jew and Arab. Maki has since moved so far from the Soviet Union as to demand that occupied/liberated territories be held against a guarantee of security from the Arab States.¹²

Despite this show of nationalism, Sneħ's post-1967 thought differed only in degree, not in kind. Still maintaining the facade of neutralism, he blamed the June war on both Western imperialism and the Soviet-aided, annihilation-bent policies of the Arab States.

But his criticism of the U.S.S.R. upon its "intervention" in Czechoslovakia in August, 1968, was more acute. The Soviets were then in no position to condemn the action of other Communist Parties for

Russian Communism, from Lenin until today, [is] a distortion of the original. [It] can only regain the true Leninist spirit through an internal struggle between its socialist base [the people] and its oppressive hierarchical super-structure.¹³

The Soviet Regime, he continued, represented the dictatorship

. . . of a bureaucratic apparatus, characterized by perversions of Marxist-Leninist theory . . . alienation from the imperative of socialist democracy, and violations of the essentials of socialist law and judicial procedure.¹⁴

The result was a corrupt and prejudiced viewpoint toward external circumstances. Though quick to condemn Israeli retaliation, Sneħ also condemned Soviet silence on Arab terrorism. Ever the tactician, he also pointed out that Soviet silence fanned the flame of Israeli militarism and increased the power of Western imperialism in Israel. Yet with it all, Sneħ conceded that the 1967 war was clearly one of

defense on the part of the people of Israel for their actual physical existence and for the actual sovereignty of the State of Israel.¹⁵

Yet so fluid was the balance of elements in Sneħ's thinking that even in this period of extreme anti-Soviet feeling, he clung to the belief that the U.S.S.R. was still the leader of the anti-imperialist camp,

12. *Pravda*, 8/8/67; see also *Maki Information Bulletin*, December, 1967, and *Al It-tihad*, 10/27/67.

13. M. Sneħ, "Thesis to the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of Israel," *Central Committee Information Bulletin*, # 10, 11/10/68.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Kol Ha'am*, 11/24/67.

despite the Czechoslovak affair of August 1968. He still considered the increase of Soviet influence in the region a much-to-be-hoped-for goal. Indeed, he said, had the U.S.S.R. adapted a neutralist position in 1967 the defeat of the Arab States would not have been equated with a defeat for "anti-imperialism." It was only the "unjustifiable and unnecessary" support of the Soviet Union for the Arab States which caused this tactical blunder. The only stance for a super-power in the Middle East was a neutral one. In the case of the Soviet Union, anything more would harness it "to a pact with Pan-Arabism with which it will be unable to abide."¹⁶ (Recent events in Egypt have proven Sneh quite correct.)

Could it be then, that Sneh's break with the Soviet Union was not as complete as has been assumed? It may well be argued that the same strange admixture of nationalism, socialism and expedience were evident in the post-1967 period as in the 1954-5 era. Yet a political purpose for offering advice to the Soviet Union is far from clear. In fact, any intimation that the difference between the Soviet Union and Maki was one merely of degree could only harm Sneh politically. In any event, Rakah was offering a far more acceptable ideology for those seeking a radical alternative. Rather, it may be that Sneh never lost hope of regaining Soviet favor, and he believed that the devastating defeat of the Arab States in 1967 would move the Soviet Union towards closer relations with Israel. Then his party would be the natural intermediary. But no such movement occurred, and perhaps his ambivalence can be best understood in the present context of Zionism-Socialism-Pragmatism.

On balance, it is quite clear that in Sneh's mind the Middle East represented, not so much a struggle against imperialism, as the clash of nationalisms. In making this claim, Sneh went one step further, also in the area of tactics. Socialism, he asserted, cannot be injected from the outside, nor can it be improvised from the top by some civilian or military dictator. Communist leaders truly interested in the progress and welfare of the Arab peoples must realize that such "enforced" socialism will only forbid Marxist education, will corrupt socialist theory, and will base its rule on "an ambitious officer corps." Indeed, it is ironic, he continued, that no Arab country has legalized the Communist Party or allowed it to propagate. While Sneh made this assertion in 1968, it should be noted that the Lebanese Communist Party was legalized in 1971.

The implications are clear. Only when the class-struggle is encouraged in the various Arab States, and the bureaucratic despotisms are overthrown, can true socialist democracy prevail. If the U.S.S.R. were to play a genuinely anti-imperialist role it would inspire such a revolution. Logically, such a revolution should also be inspired in Israel. This Sneh does not say. Indeed, just what the class-struggle entails in a sophisticated democracy, or the relevance of such a struggle in terms

16. M. Sneh, "Thesis . . ."

of the nationalist-traditionalist context of Israeli politics are concepts conspicuously absent in Sneh's thought.

Interestingly, and true to the structure of Israeli politics herein outlined, Sneh recognized the importance of the traditional trappings of political Zionism. The world Jewish community, which he described as an "ethnogenetic, religious and national" entity closely linked to the Land of Israel by 4,000 years of history, played a vital role in his thinking. Yet even this amorphous group was subjected to his criticism when he analyzed the role that Diaspora Zionism played in collaboration with "American and British imperialism" throughout the twentieth century.¹⁷

Perhaps as further evidence of his respect for the more traditional, and almost as epilogue, stand the following two items. First, consistent only with Sneh's paradoxical nature, is the fact that despite his life as an avowed secularist-Marxist, Sneh asked that the traditional Jewish ritual be carried out at his funeral and burial. In addition, a final political testament penned by Sneh on the eve of his fateful operation for cancer (January 15, 1972) carried the following statement:

All my life was devoted to the Jewish public... Nothing changed my outlook between my election at the age of 23 to chairmanship of the Polish Zionist Federation and my election at 59 to the chairmanship of Maki... The only thing which I regret is that I went as far as to totally reject Zionism—something which had no justification, neither theoretically nor practically from any serious point of view. For that I beseech forgiveness.¹⁸

Aside from the obvious implications of this passage in the present context, Sneh's judicious use of the terms "Jewish public" rather than Israeli or Zionist public, as well as his evaluation on both theoretical and practical grounds, are quite telling.

Though final evaluation of Sneh's thought is difficult, one thing seems clear. Attempts will be made to characterize Sneh as a traditional secular-Zionist who tried to live in a Socialist world but could not. Such a reading would be a gross oversimplification and do injustice to Sneh's brilliance and creativity. If his life represents a failure at synthesis, then the blame resides in something far broader than one Israeli politician. What may tentatively be said is that Israeli society, itself, consists of an attempt to exist with both traditional nationalism and progressive socialism (along with dashes of sundry other political and religious philosophies) in the context of a sophisticated governmental system, and political inconsistencies are the natural result.

17. Ibid.

18. As cited in the *Jerusalem Post*, 3/14/72.

The Extended Notion of the Sabbath

SAUL J. BERMAN

ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGES FACING the religiously sensitive Jew is avoiding the dulling impact of repetitive religious behavior. In the course of least resistance we continue in a mechanical fashion the observance of religious acts which once filled our lives with meaning and our hearts with joy. Such mechanical observance, however, produces the greatest degree of religious stagnation and long term dissatisfaction with our religious condition. On the other hand, the alternative of non-normative experimentation is unacceptable to the halakhically committed Jew since it violates his core beliefs. There is, nevertheless, at least one path open which can allow for a substantial degree of renewal within the context of the normative procedure—namely, maximizing the perceptions of meaning. An identical act can be infused with ever higher levels of significance in order to produce, not only a sense of novelty, but a renewal of the impact on the personality of the actor.

The observance of Shabbat, due to its frequency of recurrence and its apparently negative focus, often becomes a matter of habit, devoid of substantial meaning. Yet for many people outside of the religious community, the experience of Shabbat has been a major factor in their reentry into religious life. The first of these facts demands, and the second implies, the existence of a new level of awareness of the meaning of Shabbat in our lives. It is to that new consciousness that I wish to address myself.

I. Permanent and Temporal Functions of Mizvot

Commitment to the proposition of the eternal validity of Torah requires that we recognize the dual function of each mizvah—permanent and temporal. Permanent function is the manner in which the particular mizvah relates to the basic nature of man and accomplishes his transformation into a more perfected human being. Mizvot which address themselves directly to our basic human needs and emotions are, manifestly, not time-limited so long as those aspects of human nature are not radically transformed. Restrictions on unwarranted hatred, on jealousy and on violence may take on particular significance in a given historical era, yet retain, at all times, a vital role in the shaping of human personality.

While the dimension of permanent function is clear in certain

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cases, its presence is an unspoken but underlying assumption with regard to all *miṣvot*. While sometimes evident with regard to single *miṣvot*, the desired impact on the natural state of man is often to be found in units of commandments and, ultimately, in the total interaction of all the *miṣvot* as a system of life's governance. It is for this reason that selective observance undermines the full impact even of those commandments which are fulfilled.

Beyond this universal and eternal competence for transformation inherent in the *miṣvot*, there are aspects of function which are uniquely related to particular times and cultural settings. These constitute the temporal function of the *miṣvot* and are to be seen as constantly subject to revision and even abandonment. They serve their purpose in emphasizing a particular message to the Jewish people in the peculiar circumstances under which they then live, but are not necessarily equally relevant to any subsequent or prior generation of Jews living in a different environment.

We do not in any way belittle a *miṣvah* by suggesting that in every generation it may have a set of unique functions designed to maximize the total impact of the halakhic system for those who observe that system within the limits of their own temporal, geographic and civilizational environment. It is, rather, one of the most dynamic components of halakhic commitment to be able to perceive the internal responsiveness of the *miṣvot* to the unique needs of temporal beings.

It is within this context of temporal function that I address myself to an expanded notion of the Shabbat.

II. *Expanded Use of the Term "Shabbat"*

The word "Shabbat" is used in the Torah as a descriptive noun in relation to four specific periods of time. Firstly, in its most common usage, it describes the seventh day of the week, as in the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Ex. 2:8). Secondly, according to accepted Pharisaic teaching (b. *Menaḥot* 65b) the term "Shabbat" appears twice in the Torah in reference to the first day of Passover. In Leviticus 23, verses 11 and 15, the phrase, "the morrow after the Shabbat," is taken to refer, not to the day following the seventh day, the Sabbath of creation, but, rather, to the day following the first day of the holiday of Passover, the latter being thus denominated as a Shabbat.

The third time period denominated as a "Shabbat" is the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*. "It is a Sabbath of solemn rest unto you. . . ." (Lev. 16:31 and 23:32) declares the Torah.

The fourth, and final, instance of its use is in relation to the Sabbatical year when the Torah says, "But the seventh year shall be a

Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath unto the Lord. . . .” (Lev. 25:4).

The relationship of the term, “Shabbat,” to the number seven is manifest in two of these four instances, since both the seventh day and the seventh year are designated as Shabbat. The fact that the Jewish calendar can be begun with either the month of Tishrei or with the month of Nissan will allow us to recognize a further relationship of the term, “Shabbat,” to the number seven. Counting from the month of Tishrei, the seventh month, Nissan, contains a Shabbat, namely Pesah. Counting the months of the year from Nissan yields Tishrei as the seventh month, and that month, too, contains a Shabbat, Yom Kippur.

Thus, the Torah provides us with three forms of Shabbat—Shabbat of days, Shabbat of months and Shabbat of years, each being the seventh of the particular time period. The distinct character of these three time periods, as opposed to the hour or the week, lies in the fact that the day, the month and the year are natural, rather than arbitrary. The day is fixed by the time lapse of one rotation of the earth on its own axis, producing a single cycle of night and day. The month is determined by one revolution of the moon around the earth, during which we perceive one complete cycle of the birth and waning of the moon. The year is our measure of one revolution of the earth around the sun, producing a complete cycle of seasons. In contradistinction to these three, other units of time such as the minute, the hour and the week are purely artificial, human divisions of time, bearing no integral relationship to single whole cycles of perceivable natural phenomena.

The Shabbat of the Torah, then, could be described most accurately as the seventh of every natural time period. Before we proceed with our analysis of the temporal function of each of these Shabbatot, we must note a significant consequence of the conclusion reached thus far. Those who believe that God created the world in seven days of twenty-four hours can easily understand why every seventh day throughout the year is the appropriate time for commemoration of the Divine creation. However, for those who maintain that the word “day” in the Biblical account of creation does not necessarily mean a day of twenty-four hours, but, rather, some indeterminate period of time which man might measure in days, in years or in billions of years, it is somewhat perplexing, though not inexplicable, that the commemoration of creation was fixed for every seventh day.

Pursuing our prior line of reasoning, however, it is now clear that God’s creation of the universe in seven indeterminate periods of time is, indeed, celebrated, not only on the seventh day, but on the Shabbat in its now expanded sense, on the seventh of every natural time period. Creation, having occurred in time, is commemorated in time. Creation,

having been accomplished in seven time periods, is commemorated in the seventh cycle of every natural time period which man experiences.

III. *Function of Temporary Restrictions*

Each of the three types of Shabbat finds its uniqueness in a special pattern of restrictions. While these patterns of restrictions have distinct qualities related exclusively to the function of the particular Shabbat involved, they share one basic characteristic. In each case, the restrictions are temporary, are applicable only at specific times. This realization is of vital significance due to the special nature of temporary, as opposed to ongoing, prohibitions. Ongoing prohibitions, such as those banning homicide or theft, are properly taken as Divine indications that those forms of behavior are inherently evil. While there might be particular circumstances in which the banned acts might be performed in order to avoid an even greater evil, the essential recognition of the evil nature of the act is preserved. Thus, to take an extreme example, while it is permissible, or even obligatory, to destroy someone else's property in order to save your own life, you remain liable for payment of damages incurred by the innocent party. The ongoing prohibition is, *per se*, either personally injurious, socially disfunctional or contrary to revealed truth and is, therefore, banned by the Torah in unequivocal terms. Such prohibitions do not become permissible at any fixed time, just as their prohibitory character does not begin at any fixed time. Indeed, we might say that the dimension of time is a totally irrelevant consideration in regard to this category of prohibitions.

In direct contrast with the ongoing prohibitions stand the entire set of proscriptions in which fixed time is the most critical element, in which the ban both begins and ends, not in response to special circumstances, but in relation to a fixed point of time. Thus, prohibitions against work on Shabbat begin on Friday at sundown and end on Saturday night when the stars come out, the ban against eating *hamez* begins at noon on the fourteenth of Nissan and ends when the stars come out after the 22nd. Similarly, a prohibition against having intercourse with one's wife begins with the start of her menstrual period and ends with her immersion, after a minimum of twelve days. In this case, the prohibition, of fixed duration, is initiated and terminated by cyclical events.

Such temporary restrictions are certainly not attempts to ban evil behavior. There is no need to demonstrate that the various activities prohibited for fixed periods of time are not evil *per se*. Neither the performance of work, nor the eating of *hamez*, nor sexual intercourse between husband and wife, could possibly be seen as behavior which inherently bears the moral opprobrium of the Torah. What, then, constitutes the underlying principle of these temporary prohibitions? The

primary, if not exclusive, function of temporary prohibitions is to compel withdrawal for the sake of evaluation. All activities banned for fixed periods of time are essential to the normal conduct of life, but constitute only a part of the proper relationship in which they are acted out. The temporary prohibition is designed to compel us, through awareness of its absence, to evaluate the activity, to renew our consciousness of the total relationship and to place the prohibited behavior into its proper total context. Thus, the prohibition against eating on Yom Kippur is not designed to negate the significance of that activity, nor to cause us to remove it from our conscious thought. On the contrary, withdrawal from eating on the fast day is designed to make us recognize that even such a basic act as eating is part of our total relationship with God, and that substantial evaluation on our part is required to assure that it is, indeed, playing the role it should within the total relationship. Similarly, the temporary prohibition against marital intercourse while one's wife is a *niddah* is not designed to negate the significance of the sexual act but, rather, to encourage the recognition that the sexual act is only one aspect of the total relationship between husband and wife. The withdrawal from sexual relations for a brief period of time compels, not the disregard of that behavior, but a focusing of evaluative attention on it to assure that it plays its proper role within the much broader total relationship.

There is an entire body of apologetics which seeks to explain why, if we are to concentrate on our relationship to God on Yom Kippur, He should have ordered us to fast, causing even greater awareness of our physical needs at that time. It is all superfluous for, indeed, it is the awareness of our hunger that is the function of the law. For that, consciousness must be joined to our awareness of the total relationship to God, producing evaluation and repentance as to our manner of satisfying those physical needs. Similarly, the awareness of the absence of sexual satisfaction can elicit the appropriate evaluation and necessary correction in that realm of behavior.

Temporary prohibitions then, while negative in form, are part of the positive structure of consciousness and awareness in terms of their function. The Torah recognizes two modes of producing heightened religious awareness, the affirmative, as in the command to affirm verbally the sanctity of the Shabbat and its distinction from other days of the week, and the proscriptive, as in all of the instances of temporary prohibitions. In both modes, the function is the positive production of a level of religious awareness greater than that with which we began.

IV. *Shabbat of Days*

S. R. Hirsch and others have adequately characterized the pattern of temporary restrictions on the seventh day of the week as restrictions

on physical productivity. They have gone further to indicate that refraining from productivity is man's manner of testifying to the Divine creation of the universe. Man behaviorally affirms that not he, but God, is the ultimate source of all productivity.

However, the relationship with God is not the only dimension of man's life which this temporary restriction must cause us to evaluate. Indeed, the primary awareness of relationship of one engaged in productive activity is the awareness of self. Productive behavior is a prime method for affirming one's own value as a person. In contemporary society, a non-productive citizen is not only a failure on societal terms, a reject who warrants the self-righteous pity of the productive masses, but he is also a psychologically injured person, lacking a sense of identity which, seemingly, only being productive would provide for him.

Perhaps the most common form of self-identification which people use is the identification via productive role. "I am a doctor," or a similar statement seems to be the most commonly elicited response to the question of a person's identity. The use of titles in identifying people to each other is not solely a matter of clarifying who the person is, but is often also an attempt to identify the person with his productive role: "This is *Dr. Goldsmith*," "*Prof. Stein*," "*Rabbi Smith*." Woe to the man who lacks a title, but he will be identified in a declarative sentence following his mumbled name, "he is an attorney," "Mr. Greenstein—a teacher."

The temporary restriction on productivity on every Shabbat, the fact that productive roles are suspended, can lead to the recognition that productivity is only one aspect of identity which must be properly placed within the total relationship of the individual himself. But this consciousness does not imply a withdrawal from thinking about productivity. If anything, the consequence should be an intensive grappling with the question of what the proper role of productivity is within the broader identity of the individual.

That man's identity is not coequal with his productive role is an awareness which must mold, not only the individual's consciousness of himself, but, as well, his attitude towards, and relationship with, others. A critical measure of our successful integration of the function of the Sabbath of days is whether we are able to relate to other people without pigeonholing them according to their productive roles. Writ large, the question becomes whether the Jewish community, as a result of its communal experience of the Shabbat, becomes better able to value people and honor them for their qualities as Jews and as human beings without making their productivity the central measure of quality.

Thus, the unique temporary restriction of the Shabbat of days has, as its primary temporal function, a major re-evaluation of the position of productivity in the relations between man and God, man and

himself and man and his fellow man. In the dimensions of each of these human relationships, refraining from productivity calls on us to recognize how the terminated behavior still allows us to continue the relationship on other, at least equally significant, grounds. Behavior from which we can refrain without loss of relationship with God, without loss of personal identity, and without terminating relationships with other people, obviously does not constitute either the totality, or the central core of those relationships.

V. *Shabbat of Months*

Pesaḥ, in the seventh month from Tishrei, and Yom Kippur, in the seventh month from Nissan, together constitute the Shabbat of months. While these two Holidays share with the Shabbat of days restrictions on productivity, they also have a unique temporary restriction which is not found in the Shabbat of days. On Pesaḥ, the eating of, and benefit from, ḥamez are prohibited. On Yom Kippur, the eating or drinking of foods and drinks, as well as the physical benefit of salving the body with oils or the wearing of leather shoes are banned. In broader, but nevertheless precise, terms we may say that the characteristic restrictions of the Shabbat of months is the temporary prohibition of various forms of human consumption.

Applying our general notion of the function of temporary restrictions, we find, not negation of the significance of consumption but, rather, a dual suggestion, firstly, of the need for evaluation of this vital activity, and secondly, the proposition that it is indeed only part of each of the broader relationships in which the individual is involved. Again, let us treat each of three basic relationships in terms of the role that consumption plays in them.

The Torah insists, primarily through the laws of *kashrut*, that *what* we consume is to be seen as an element of our relationship to God. Beyond that, through the Shabbat of months, we are informed that the entire act of consumption, the goods, the quantity, the quality, the timing, the act itself, are all part of that same relationship. Much as man is not to substitute himself for God as the ultimate producer, so he is not to exclude God from the process of consumption. In an ultimate sense, consumption is not an absolute right vested in man to benefit from the goods which exist in the world, but is, rather, a privilege granted to him by God, limited by the very relationship with God from which the privilege emerges.

The Sages projected this same concept into the daily experience of the Jew through the institution of *birkhot hanehenin*, blessings over physical pleasures. By emphasizing the blessings as a request for permission to consume, they not only projected the recognition of God as the

source of that which is to be consumed, but also introduced the inherent limits on man's legal and moral right to consume the goods.

Further yet within this same context, the temporary restrictions on consumption imply that we are not to measure the totality of our relationship to God by whether He has provided us with all that we desire to consume. It is an obvious truth, yet bears frequent repetition, that God can say no as well as yes, and that His failure to grant our petitions, particularly for material goods, is not to be seen as abandonment or as personal rejection. The measures of one's relationship with God are many, and only the corruption of the religious sense could lead to its being measured exclusively by one's success in his pattern of consumption of material goods.

Equally significant as an aspect of the temporal function of the Shabbat of months is its impact on the way in which we perceive ourselves. As we are not to view the essence of our identities emerging from our capacity to produce, we are not to define our essence in terms of our ability to consume. The plague of conspicuous consumption which strikes at the roots of our religious community is all the more dangerous because it leads people to think that their entire value as human beings is at stake if they cannot demonstrably consume equally with their neighbors.

The Shabbat of days equalizes productivity, since no one produces on that day, and thereby allows the individual to develop a self-conception which is more inclusive than productivity. Similarly, the Shabbat of months equalizes consumption; on Yom Kippur no one eats, on Pesah no one eats *hamez*. This allows the individual to develop a sense of identity in which his pattern of consumption is more properly placed as only one factor in his total conception of self. The element of competition in consumption tends to aggrandize that process beyond its proper significance. The equalization accomplished by the Shabbat of months allows the evaluation of the process to proceed without the warping of values which results from competition in this area.

The most common context for the misvaluing of patterns of consumption is the relationship between people. Neither what a person is, nor what he has, is the popular manner of evaluating him, but what he spends, what he consumes. It is quite true that some of the most significant moral decisions a person makes in his daily life are those related to his pattern of consumption. But, generally, it is not the moral determinants which are evaluated by others as much as the more obvious standard of quantity. Few people are as concerned with the amount of money which the parents of the bride and groom gave to charity in celebration of their joyous occasion, as they are with the quantity of food at the feast and the quality of the roast beef. Pot-latch is not a new stan-

dard of measuring people, but in Judaism it has survived despite its express and implied rejection by the tenets of the religion.

As a measure of the value of a human being, consumption has its place, but our experience of the Shabbat of months must encourage a type of evaluation which allows us to place that factor into proper perspective.

The temporary restrictions unique to the Shabbat of months thus function in the context of the three basic dimensions of man's life to demand an intensive evaluation of the proper role of consumption within those relationships. We are called upon, not to negate the significance of the activity, but to recognize that it is only part of the broader concerns in our relationship to God, in our definition of self and in our relationship to others.

VI. *Shabbat of Years*

The final use of the term "Shabbat" in the Torah relates to the seventh year, the Sabbatical year. The Shabbat of years contains limits on productivity and on consumption, as do the Shabbat of days and the Shabbat of months, respectively. In the Sabbatical year, the working of the land and eating freely of that which was grown during that year are limited. But in addition to these restrictions, there is a temporary prohibition which is unique to this particular period of time, the ban against collection of debts (Deut. 15:2).

The laws of *shmitat kesafim*, of the cancellation of debts in the Sabbatical year, while primarily designed to prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a limited class, is also one element of a basic Biblical design severely to limit the institution of slavery. The critical reversal of values evident in the Torah, as opposed to what we find in general ancient Near Eastern society, is perhaps nowhere more evident than in this area. While the contemporaries of the ancient Israelites saw no evil in slavery and used their legal system to preserve the institution, the Torah manifests a clear preference for freedom and uses the legal structure to limit the evil, as well as the incidence, of slavery. Thus, Hammurabi's Code (# 282) provides that an escaped slave who denies his status, when recaptured, is to have his ear cut off as penalty for his crime. The Torah uses a similar, though less painful penalty, the piercing of the ear, but for exactly the opposite crime, the refusal to go free after six years and insisting on remaining a slave (Ex. 21:6). The shift in values, from affirmation of slavery to its negation, could not be more obvious to people familiar with the penal system of the ancient Near East.

Since sale into slavery for the failure to pay debts was one of the most common means for the expansion of slavery, the Torah attempted to prevent the seemingly inevitable growth of indebtedness through the

prohibition against usury and through the cancellation of debt in the Sabbatical year. This latter provision, then, can be described as an attempt to prevent the exercise of total power by one person over another. The laws of the Sabbatical year, indeed, seem severely to proscribe the exercise of man's power, both over his land and over other persons.

The function of such restrictions is clear within the context of the relationship between man and God. He, and He alone, is to be affirmed as the ultimate power in the universe. Only God may exercise free, untrammelled power over both property and human beings. No man may claim such power for himself. Whatever power man is granted is his only in a fiduciary relationship, and may remain his only so long as he fulfills the responsibilities which that power bears with it. It is not incidental that Rabbinic literature is replete with stories propounding the principle that giving charity is the only sure way of preserving one's wealth. Similarly, the ascription to God of the declaration "They are *my* slaves, and not slaves unto slaves," is an element of this same teaching.

Equally clear is the temporal function of the restriction on power of the Shabbat of years within the relationship of the individual to himself. Power over property and persons is not to be used by the individual as the measure of his own value as a human being. A proper evaluation of the role of power within the identity of the individual must lead to a recognition, not only of how fragmentary an element of the total it is, but also to a greater perception of the relationship between power and responsibilities.

Whether it be the relationship between parents and children, or between a teacher and students, or any relationship in which power is an element, the experience of the Shabbat of years must be felt. Not that power is evil, *per se*, but we must recognize that evil can, indeed, be produced where behavior is premised on the notion that any challenge to our power is an assault on our essential identity. A parent or teacher or administrator or employer who responds to the challenge of his power as if he had been threatened with negation as a human being, has overly identified his identity with his power. Such a person has not properly experienced the impact of the Shabbat of years.

The third stage is self-evident. Not only ought power not constitute the core of our own identity, but it must also not be constituted as the sole measure of the value of others in our relationships with them. It is much simpler to gain power than to use it properly. If it is true that absolute power corrupts absolutely, it is only because the potential for corruption is greater where responsibilities are greater, and the perception of power as the value, rather than the morality of the manner of its exercise, is bound to lead to the negation of all responsibilities. The temporary restriction on power achieved through the cancellation of debt in the Shabbat of years has as its function the limitation of the role

of power in interpersonal relationships, as it served similar functions in the relationship between man and God and in the individual's conception of his own identity.

VII. *Conclusion*

Let us now summarize by viewing the temporal function of the extended motion of the Shabbat in terms of the relationships which they address, rather than in terms of the sequence of days, months and years.

A. With reference to our relationship to God we see the following:

1. In the Shabbat of days—that God, and not man, is the ultimate productive force in the universe.
2. In the Shabbat of months—that consumption is a privilege granted to man by God and is not an absolute human right.
3. In the Shabbat of years—that God is the sole ultimate power and that any power over property which is granted to man is held by us with fiduciary responsibilities.

B. With reference to our perception of our own identity, we find that neither our own productivity, nor our consumption, nor the extent of our power over property or persons ought, in isolation, to form the core of our conception of our own value as persons.

C. In regard to our relationships to others, the three Shabbatot inform us that we are not to measure the value of another person solely by his productivity, consumption or power.

The impact of the absence of these principles in our society can be seen most clearly in the total social devaluation of the elderly. They have ceased producing, they can no longer consume goods as efficiently as heretofore and they lack substantial power. The results have been that they have been discarded by society as if they had lost their value as human beings. And, perhaps even more tragic, the elderly have often so totally absorbed these false measures as the standards of their own worth that they begin to experience what in a younger person we would call an adolescent identity crisis.

While it is clear that much of Jewish law has had an impact on the Jewish personality merely through its observance, it is also true that observance with an awareness of function can heighten and hasten the process of integration of those values into one's personality. The exposition of the temporal function of the temporary restrictions of the various forms of Shabbat may aid us in our resistance to the corrosive impact of corrupt social values.

“ON THE OTHER HAND . . .” A Sheaf of Letters

No ideal receives greater adulation in our democratic society than freedom of expression. At every turn one hears repeated the ringing declaration of Voltaire: “I shall fight your views to the death, but shall defend to the death your right to express them.” Nevertheless, it is true that, generally, freedom of expression is construed to mean freedom of expression for one’s own views, and is regarded as entirely compatible with the passive willingness, if not the active effort, to suppress contrary opinions.

More than two decades have elapsed since the American Jewish Congress, in response to the urging of the present Editor of JUDAISM, launched this journal, dedicated to Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics. At the inception of JUDAISM, two basic functions were envisaged: the creation of a *medium of expression* for all points of view, and the establishment of a *forum of communication* among the various schools of thought and action in Jewish life.

This dual purpose has remained constant through the years. The editorial policy of JUDAISM has been to keep its columns open to every viewpoint and approach to Jewish life and thought that is significant or, at least, is stimulating in content and attractive in form. It is emphatically true that we have published material, both ideological and scholarly in character, with which the Editor is in disagreement. In very rare instances, he has indicated his personal divergence from the article in question in his own column, *The First Reader*. But, always, the test of acceptability of a contribution has been the degree to which readers would find it interesting and rewarding. The only “line” of JUDAISM is that it has “no line.”

The Spring 1973 issue of JUDAISM, which was dedicated to the State of Israel on its twenty fifth anniversary and contained a symposium on the various facets of Israeli life today, is a good case in point. In some instances, contradictory opinions were expressed by several contributors writing on the same basic theme. In others, only one contributor dealt with a given topic, yet even here the principle stands—the views expressed are the responsibility of the author and are not necessarily those of the Editor. As was pointed out in that issue, the effort was made in the planning to have every significant point of view expressed by a responsible spokesman for the position. To be sure, several areas of interest and attitudes were not represented, only because promised contributions failed to materialize. Nonetheless, the breadth of scope reflected in the pages of the Israel Jubilee Issue has made it a significant resource for understanding the people of Israel today and tomorrow.

During the past few issues of the journal, several articles, primarily scholarly and philosophical, have evoked more than the usual amount of correspondence. Because of the importance of the themes treated, we are devoting a larger amount of space than usual for excerpts from this correspondence and for responses by the original authors.

ROBERT GORDIS

About the Secret

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

It was with a great deal of surprise that I read Professor Samson H. Levey's essay, *The Best Kept Secret in the Rabbinic Tradition*, in the Fall, 1972, issue of JUDAISM.

It is difficult to see how a recognized scholar, well versed in Rabbinic literature, can resort to arguments so lacking in substance to prove so far-fetched a thesis.

The following are a few comments directed to that aspect of Prof. Levey's essay which relates to the Rabbinic texts.

1) Professor Levey points to the fact that Ben Zoma, Ben Azzai and Elisha b. Abuyah are linked together (Ber. 75b) as *talmidei hakhamim* and that they are also mentioned in the PRDS episode (Hag. 14b). This indicates to him that the term *talmid hakham* may have been, during the time of Ben Zoma, "something less than desirable."

Firstly, the meaning of the term *talmid hakham* as related to Ben Zoma and Ben Azzai is clearly stated in Tos. Kiddushin 3:9: [If one says to a woman] "You are betrothed to me on condition that I am a *talmid hakham*, it is not required that he be like Shimon b. Azzai or like Shimon b. Zoma, but like anyone who commands the respect of the people of the town." The significance of the title *talmid hakham* is further attested by numerous *midrashim* by Ben Zoma's contemporaries and there is never a question of its desirability.

Secondly, the same source (Ber. 57b) enumerates another trio (Rabbi Akiba, R. Yishmael and R. Elieser b. Azariah) who are named *hakhamim*.

2) Prof. Levey quotes the four versions of the Ben Zoma-R. Joshua incident. For reasons favorable to his argument, he prefers the Babylonian Talmud version, although all indications point to the Tosefta as the orig-

inal. Why the preference for the Babylonian Talmud version? Because only it contains the "three fingers" and the "Dove," the two so-called christological references.

Regarding the "fingers," which Friedman, in the Soncino translation of Genesis Rabba renders "finger-breadth," and which Prof. Levey dismisses as incorrect, there is not a shadow of a doubt that wherever this and related terms appear in the Rabbinic literature, they always have a spatial meaning. If there is diversity regarding the space between the *lower and upper waters* in the versions it is precisely because all of these norms are employed by the Rabbis as spatial norms and often in juxtaposition. Anybody acquainted with the nature of transmission of the oral tradition would not find the variants surprising.

3) The same is true concerning the different birds in the versions. The juxtaposition of dove-bird and eagle-bird is found in the Bible (Hos. 7: 11-12, 11:11; Prov. 23:5). If the Torah employs the eagle and the prophets use the eagle, the dove and the bird as similes, there is no reason why Ben Zoma should not. Does not R. Jose (Ber. 3a) employ a dove simile regarding the *bat kol*? ("I heard a *bat kol* cooing like a dove.")

Prof. Levey finds in the questions directed to Ben Zoma following the PRDS episode the strongest support for his hypothesis. He examines only the second question . . . whether a virgin who has become pregnant is eligible to marry a High Priest. There are, indeed, variant readings of this passage, and they were duly noted in *Dikdukei Soferim*. They omit the reference to the High Priest and thus the question becomes whether there is a possibility for a virgin to become pregnant. From the point of view of *halakhic* inquiry both readings have legal implications. Prof. Lieberman (*Tosef-*

ta kifshutah Moed. p. 1290) has suggested that the Rabbis were out to test Ben Zoma after his emergence from the PRDS to ascertain his competence in matters of *halakhah*. Both questions, one regarding the castration of a dog and the other relating to the pregnancy of a virgin, are of a complex character (see *Rashi* and *Tosafot* ad loc.) and require a profound understanding of the wider ramifications of these two issues. The relationship between *heikhalot* and *halakhot* was repeatedly emphasized in Rabbinic mysticism.

Prof. Levey says that the question "sounds like one of *halakhah*." It is, in fact, a halakhic question. The terminology, *shaalu*, is mostly applied to such questions. In the case of Ben Zoma it is used four more times. In *Tosefta Ber.* (Bab. Tal. Ber. 43a) we read: "Ben Zoma was asked, 'Why is it laid down that if wine is brought in the course of the meal each one recites the blessing for himself?'" (Is that a veiled reference to Jesus' comparison of the cup of wine at the Last Supper?) In the Babylonian Talmud, Ber. 43a: "Ben Zoma was asked, 'Why is it laid down that things which form an integrated part of the meal when taken in the course of a meal require no blessing either before or after?'" (Is that again a reference to the Last Supper?) *Tosefta Kippurim* 1:16: (Bab. Tal. Yoma 30a.) "Ben Zoma was asked, 'What is the purpose of the immersion for every man who wishes to enter the Temple Court?'" (Baptism?) *Tosefta Taharot* 6:17: "Ben Zoma was asked, 'Why is a condition of doubt concerning a private domain accounted unclean?'" (I wonder to what this may relate?)

All these questions have halakhaic implications, as is apparent from their context. It should also be noted that the term, *shaalu*, as introducing a halakhic inquiry, is found also with Hillel the Elder, R. Yohanan b. Zakkai, R. Akiba, R. Yishmael, R. Shimon, R. Jose and many others.

The Ben Zoma-R. Joshua episode is, according to Prof. Levey, another item of "indisputable evidence" that Ben Zoma was, indeed, a Christian. Much is made from the fact that Ben Zoma did not rise to greet his master and teacher. This indicates to Prof. Levey that he rejected R. Joshua's teachings.

Now, one of the versions asserts that the reason Ben Zoma did not respond to the teacher's greeting was that he was so engrossed in his thoughts as not to have noticed him. This is quite understandable. Moreover, a similar incident is reported in the Babylonian Talmud (Kid. 33a) as well as in the Jerusalem Talmud. We are told that R. Ishmael, the son of R. Jose, did not rise before R. Shimon b. Rabbi. The latter complained to his father who told him that "perhaps he was sitting and meditating..."

Prof. Levey's interpretation of *me-ayin uleayin* fits nicely into his hypotheses; however, *ikkar haser min ha-sefer*.

His objection to Lieberman's interpretation that it imputes that R. Joshua subscribed to an Epicurean or Gnostic approach, lacks foundation. Lieberman does not state that, either explicitly or implicitly. Secondly, to adhere to some ideas of orthodox Gnosticism which, as was pointed out by many scholars, was prevalent in Rabbinic circles at the time of R. Joshua, is not as unacceptable as the idea that one of the great Sages was an apostate.

Levey's fabricated *midrash* on Ex. 8:15 is so far-fetched that it does not merit comment.

Prof. Levey's "even more convincing" evidence derived from the "dove" and the "water" motifs that Ben Zoma was a Christian lacks all substance. We have already commented on the "dove." As to the "water," a mere perusal of the *midrashim* related to the creation chapter in Genesis will show that the "upper and lower waters" were a favored theme, especially

in those *midrashim* which delve into *maasei bereshit*.

After quoting Prof. S. Lieberman (p. 461), Prof. Levey states: "Lieberman's explanation of the episode is an intensive elaboration with extensive documentation of the thesis that Ben Zoma's dereliction was a Gnostic heresy, as first proposed by H. Grätz. The flaw in this interpretation is Ben Zoma's statement in Ber. 58a in which he implies that he is the center of creation, not 'nothing.'"

Is this sufficient to repudiate a theory based on "extensive documentation"? What is the flaw in Lieberman's thesis? That Ben Zoma said evasively *I am nothing from nothing* and in Ber. 58a he *implies* that he is the center of creation. This is a misreading of the passage. Ben Zoma does *not* imply that he is the center of creation but asserts that God, in His infinite wisdom, provides for everybody's needs. The Jerusalem Talmud version of this saying is complemented by a quotation from Job 36:24, "Remember that thou magnify His work."

Prof. Levey states: "His (Ben Zoma's) manipulation of the Holy Writ was so clever that it may have earned him the rather dubious distinction of being designated 'the interpreter.'" Prof. Levey does not provide us with examples of the *clever manipulations*. A check of all the *derashot* attributed to Ben Zoma shows that none of them can be categorized as "manipulations," clever or otherwise.

Moreover, since when is being an "interpreter" a dubious distinction? If it is, then Ben Zoma is in distinguished company. Not only were Shemayah and Avtalyon designated by the same title, but, according to the Rabbis, Moses and even God Himself engaged in this "dubious" activity.

Prof. Levey asserts that the Rabbis, in some instances, concealed Ben Zoma's thoughts and interpretations by the use of esoteric language and by the principal of *hafukh*. As far as can be determined from Tannaitic litera-

ture, the principal of *hafukh* is not employed to hide the meaning of certain words or phrases, but, like the principal of *sares*, is a hermeneutic device to interpret Biblical texts.

On the basis of the argument which relies almost exclusively on the Babylonian Talmud version of the Ben Zoma-R. Joshua episode, Prof. Levey concludes that "the version of the incident with R. Joshua as recorded in the Babylonian Talmud is the authentic one and preserves the original Tannaitic tradition concerning it, and all other versions contain distortions which have crept into the account." This is an excellent example of a *circulus in probando*.

Los Angeles
California

ELIESER SLOMOVIC

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

Samson Levey's "The Best Kept Secret of the Rabbinic Tradition" has done an excellent job of highlighting the problems with the Simeon B. Zoma tradition; but I feel that his article fails to prove his points.

A. In pointing out that Ben Azzai, Elisha b. Abuyah, and Ben Zoma are linked together as *Talmidei Hakhamim*, Professor Levey indicates in footnote #9 that the use of this term "may be something less than desirable and may account for the Tannaitic refusal to give them the title 'Rabbi.'" This is, I feel, an unfounded assertion, in that Dr. Levey fails to establish that (1) all other instances of the use of the term *Talmid Hakham* also indicate such a condition and possess a pejorative connotation (such as he implies here), and (2) in suggesting that this may have been the reason for the failure of the individuals involved to achieve rabbinical ordination, he ignores the complex social and economic factors involved in achieving such rabbinic status in Ancient Palestine.

B. Having linked the three men of the PRDS incident, . . . Professor Levey ascribes the secret of Ben Zo-

ma's conversion to (the) tradition of the respect shown to the words of a sage, yet he then fails to explain adequately the failure of the sages to observe this tradition (of respect for a sage's words and opinions) also with regard to Elisha b. Abuyah . . . One could attempt to explain the differences in treatment of Ben Zoma and Elisha by the different personalities; or one could delve into the different kinds of apostasy with relationship to the different kinds of treatment each received at the hands of their contemporaries and the Talmudic tradition itself. Professor Levey attempts neither, and, in fact, ignores the differences in treatment between Ben Zoma and Elisha.

C. The illustration of the aggadah about the finger of God and "God is a finger," thus giving a christological interpretation to Ben Zoma's answer to R. Joshua, is certainly imaginative, but hardly a substantial answer and, in fact, hardly more than conjecture.

D. Finally, in two instances, Professor Levey asserts that the words of Ben Zoma are alluding to the N.T. books of *Matthew* and *Mark*, or at least to doctrines found in them, if not the actual passages cited. These books were in existence during the time of Ben Zoma, but Dr. Levey is unclear as to Ben Zoma's relationship with them. It seems to me that he would be on extremely unsure ground in asserting a relationship with them (based on his article), especially *Matthew*, and that the reader must view statements relating doctrines and passages of *Matthew* with suspicion and a jaundiced eye.

San Diego, Cal. BRUCE H. CHARNOV

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

"The Best Kept Secret . . ." was of particular interest to me. As you may recall, its author offers the explanation that *heziz ve-nifgah* means simply that he became Christian. Interestingly enough, I heard that very

same explanation some 25 years ago, from the late Dr. I. Niger (vice-principal of Reali Ivri school in Haifa). During a class in Aggadah, while reading from the excellent text of Bialik-Ravnitski, we were discussing the gentlemen who entered the PRDS, etc. Dr. Niger then explained *heziz ve-nifgah* in its traditional manner (i.e., became agnostic), then added the possibility that he might have become a Christian, *lo aleinu*. (All of which proves, again, that "there is nothing new under the sun.")

A second point: it seems to me that the author, while going into several interesting etymological explanations of PRDS, does not mention—if only for the sake of completeness—the traditional meaning of it, viz., the acronym for *Peshat*, *Remez*, *Drush*, *Sod*, the four approaches to interpreting the Scriptures.

Finally, may I offer (in a somewhat light vein) a most fitting English translation for *aher*, in the above-mentioned story? It is: "What's-his-name." To me, it conveys the same derision, debasement and, at the same time, an attempt to minimize the damage done, as *aher* conveys in Hebrew.

Albuquerque SHLOMO KARNI
New Mexico

RABBI LEVEY replies:

I wish to respond to Professor Elieser Slomovic as follows:

1. Prof. Slomovic inadvertently tends to support my argument that the term *Talmid Hakham* may have had some derogatory or diminutive connotation when applied to Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, and Aher, by pointing out that Rabbi (not R. Akiba as Slomovic misquotes), R. Ishmael, and R. Elazar b. Azariah were referred to as *Hakhamim*. (Ber. 57). Precisely!

2. His contention that "all indications point to the Tosefta as the original" Baraita, is a faulty assertion. Where are all the indications and by whom? Waxman uses the version in

Genesis Rabbah, not the Tosefta, because it is similar to the Bavli. (*Ketavim Nivharim*, vol. 2, p. 141 and footnote 45.) The only validity for preferring one version over another is the intrinsic value of its substance in terms of an argument that has some cogency, which I think I have demonstrated for the version of the Babylonian Talmud. I agree that in many instances the term *'etzba* does have spatial significance, but Slomovic is unscientific, uncritical, and unscholarly in his sweeping assertion that "there is not a shadow of a doubt that wherever this and related terms appear in the Rabbinic Literature, they always have a spatial meaning." What of Men. 11a? And in the theological frame of reference the Tradition uses the term symbolically or metaphorically, e.g. "This New Moon shall be unto you, etc." (Ex. 12:2) R. Akiba says, "This is one of the three things which Moses was unable to understand, and all of them God showed him *b'etzba*." (Me-kilta, Pisha, Chapter II, Lauterbach I, p. 14-15)

3. Slomovic fails utterly to refute my argument concerning the dove as a reference to the baptism of Jesus, he simply talks around the use of bird-imagery, without rhyme or reason.

4. Slomovic's contention that the question *b'tulah she'ibrah mahu* is halakhic, is ludicrous. Perhaps he will also argue that Ben Zoma was familiar with Shmuel and Shmuel's technique, and answered, "*Amar l'ho di-Shmuel lo shekhiah*" (Hag 15a). But I congratulate Slomovic in the belief that he is perhaps on the verge of becoming perceptive, as indicated by his parenthetical questions with reference to the Last Supper and baptism. And as to Ben Zoma's clever and devious answers, I defy Slomovic to explain Tos. Taharot 6:17 in any other way. All of this I elaborate on in my expanded manuscript.

5. Prof. Slomovic's summary dismissal of my interpretation of Ex. 8:15 is probably the best evidence that the

interpretation has merit—it may be too valid to provide him with a logical rebuttal, which is glaringly absent.

6. I admire Prof. Slomovic's defense of Prof. Lieberman, who really needs no public defender. Prof. Lieberman has few peers as an authority on Rabbinic Literature, and I have the highest respect for him. But I am not convinced that the term *lo me'ayin* in a stray Genizah fragment must mean "nothing from nothing." It might mean "I am *not* from nothing." However, I might even concede Prof. Lieberman's argument that Ben Zoma's heresy was Sethian Gnosticism. Have we lost sight of the fact that the Sethians were a Jewish-Christian sect? (See J. Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, pp. 76 ff.) In fact, in a letter to Prof. Lieberman dated November 21, 1969, I maintained that the hypothesis which I have in mind does not preclude his interpretation.

I think Slomovic touches the nerve center of the entire issue when he proclaims that "orthodox Gnosticism (sic!) . . . is not as unacceptable as the idea that one of the great Sages was an apostate." Slomovic is really saying, please don't point to what may be the truth: it may be too hard to swallow, let alone digest.

All told, I am grateful to Prof. Slomovic for the excitement with which he lunges into the argument, and for providing the challenge that the subject merits.

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Rabbi Bruce H. Charnov's critique of my Ben Zoma hypothesis has some points that require response and elucidation, although in his basic arguments he criticizes that which is *tafel* and ignores that which is *'ikkar*.

But to answer his objections serially:

A. Rabbi Charnov has lifted a phrase from footnote #9 out of context. In that footnote I stated that the fact that Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma and Elisha b. Abuyah "are linked together as *Talmidei Hakhamim*, and

that they were the same three who fared ill in the PRDS incident, Hag. 14b, may be indicative *that at this stage* [italics mine] the Tannaitic term *Talmid Hakham* may be something less than desirable," etc. In the light of the complete statement Rabbi Charnov's contention is a straw man and crumbles into nothing.

B. There is a tremendous difference between Elisha b. Abuyah and Ben Zoma in the manner in which each of these manifested his dereliction. There is no evidence that Ben Zoma ever did anything overtly to harm the Jewish people. He simply "glimpsed and was stricken." Elisha b. Abuyah *kizez bantiy'ot*, "cut the roots," he not only severed his ties with Judaism and the Jewish people, but he committed criminal acts such as "he slew the Torah greats" and "destroyed his handiwork," and by advising the Romans on how to implement their edict forcing Jews to violate the Sabbath (p. Hag. Ch. II, 77 b, Kratoshin). And yet, in spite of this, the Rabbinic tradition nevertheless preserved Elisha b. Abuyah's teachings, albeit in rather unusual form. Horayot 13b states "They attributed *Aherim* to R. Meir and *Yesh Omrim* to R. Natan." And yet there are instances when R. Meir and *Aherim* differ on the same point (e.g. Ber. 9b; A.Z. 64b). This is resolved in Tosafot Sot. 12a caption *Aherim*: "Our Master said that he saw in a French Commentary, that the traditions which [R. Meir] received from Elisha b. Abuyah he [R. Meir] designated under the name of *Aherim*, since his [Elisha b. Abuyah's] appellation was *Aher*."

Apparently the tradition had it that the term *Aherim omrim*, "*Aherim* say" was applied by R. Meir to the teachings which he received from Elisha b. Abuyah, and that these are cited as such in the Talmud. In my article in JUDAISM I naturally could not go into a detailed discussion of every minutia, but in my projected

volume on the subject I have a chapter on the four who entered the PRDS.

C. As for Rabbi Charnov's assessment of my interpretation of "three fingers," I wish he might have been more scrupulously exact in quoting me. I did not state that "God is a finger," as he maintains, but "finger is God," allegorically. In terms of my methodology, he should recognize the literary and Midrashic use of metaphor.

D. My allusion to material in the Christian tradition does not specify Matthew as such. I do cite Mark 1:9-11 concerning the baptism of Jesus, since the reference to the dove is found there. There can be no doubt that the Q oral tradition is earlier than Ben Zoma and that Mark can be dated c. 65-71 C.E. (*Interpreter's Bible*, v. 7, pp. 629 ff.) In general, I stated that these are early teachings of the church, "with special reference to the materials which subsequently were incorporated into the writings of the New Testament."

I appreciate Rabbi Charnov's intense interest in the Ben Zoma article and his taking the pains to discuss it. His arguments, however, are charged with emotion, which I can understand, since the very nature of my Ben Zoma hypothesis presents a threat, real or imagined, to some precious, inbred ideas, which are not easily relinquished.

Los Angeles, Cal. SAMSON H. LEVEY

## On Maimonides' God

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

I found Rabbi Shubert Spero's article, "Is the God of Maimonides Truly Unknowable" (JUDAISM, Winter 1973) an excellent example of philosophic analysis in the field of medieval Jewish philosophy. JUDAISM magazine is to be complimented for its

continuing willingness to publish articles of this level of careful reasoning and Jewish scholarship. In addition, I would like to make a few comments, by way of corrections . . . that . . . are not intended to be a general criticism of what I judge to be an unquestionably fine article.

1. Rabbi Spero claims that "The implication of Samuelson's presentation (in "On Knowing God," JUDAISM, Winter 1969) seems to be that Maimonides' theory of the Divine attributes is in some sense a proposed solution to the problem of theodicy." If my article does contain such an implication, it is purely unintentional. My concern was to demonstrate that the theological judgment that God is unknowable, in the sense that no positive judgments can be made about God beyond the assertion that God exists, is untenable. The first part of my paper shows how, in popular thought, such a claim arises in connection with the problem of theodicy. The body of the paper is concerned with a critique and, ultimately, a rejection of Maimonides' argument for ignorance of more than God's existence. In Maimonides' case, this position is treated independently of the question of theodicy . . .

However, it is also fair to say that Maimonides' theory of negative attributes is not totally unrelated to the problem of theodicy. Maimonides' discussion of the problem of theodicy (*Guide* III, 8–15) rests ultimately, by his own admission (*Guide* III, 15) on the claim that divine providence extends to human individuals (*Guide* III, 16–25). Maimonides' justification for his claim about divine providence rests on his theory of divine attributes. (In particular, note *Guide* III, 19–21.) . . .

Gersonides went so far as to claim that Maimonides devised his absurd (in Gersonides' and my opinion) theory of negative attributes solely to avoid denying divine knowledge of particulars. (See Gersonides, *The Wars*

*of God*, III, 3, pg. 132 in the Leipzig, 1866 edition.)

2. Conventional and traditional interpretations of Maimonides' account of divine attributes have maintained that the actions which Maimonides says can be affirmed of God are distinct from all predicates, including expressions of relations, which cannot in any literal or unequivocal sense be affirmed of God. In opposition to this standard interpretation, Rabbi Spero wants to maintain that Maimonides intended that relational expressions are to be understood as applicable to God in the same way that actions are said to be affirmed of the Creator. Rabbi Spero based his argument on two specific texts in the *Guide*. Unfortunately, in both cases, Rabbi Spero's reading of the text rests on unreliable English translations by M. Friedlander (N.Y.: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1942).

The first text in question is the following: In Book I, chapter 53, Maimonides argues that the traditional predicates of "living," "powerful," "knowing" and "willing" do not imply any complexity in God; rather, these predicates and all others that may be affirmed of God, in some sense refer to God Himself in His simplicity and name neither something super-added to the essence or substance (*ezem*) that is God nor a part of that essence or substance. At the end of this argument Maimonides says that "it makes no difference whether they (viz. the attributes) are (said) with reference to (God's) actions or with reference to (God's) various relations." In other words, any predicate applied to God simply names God, and in this respect it makes no difference what kind of predicate is being asserted, be it an action or a relation. Unfortunately, Rabbi Spero misinterpreted Friedlander's rendition, "there is no difference" to mean that there is no difference between relations and actions. (See Spero, pg. 70.)

The second text in question is the

following: in Book I, chapter 52, Maimonides lists five possible kinds of affirmative predicates. He denies that the first three have any legitimate application to God on the ground that to admit such affirmative predication unequivocally of God would entail the consequence that God is complex. The fourth kind of predicate considered are relations. Maimonides argues that relations are unacceptable, not because they entail complexity in God, but rather because they entail that God is not in every respect a perfect being . . . However, at the conclusion of this argument Maimonides makes the following comment, that "however, these (viz. relations) are the most appropriate (of these kinds of) predicates. They are forgivable with reference to what is predicated of God, because they do not affirm a multiplicity of eternal entities (in the divine substance)." . . . In consequence of Friedlander's mistranslation of the original text, Rabbi Spero erroneously reasoned that Maimonides distinguished between "a strong and a weak sense of relational attributes" and that "Maimonides was convinced that in a strict and literal sense" relations can be affirmed of God. In fact, Maimonides made no such claim. Rather, he said that of four kinds of false divine predications, relations are less objectionable than the others.

3. Rabbi Spero says that in response to the question, "Who is God," it is perfectly legitimate to reply, "God is the creator of the world, the giver of the Torah, the liberator of our people from Egyptian bondage." Clearly, these are action predicates and, clearly, they are the primary means by which the God of Israel is identified. Unquestionably, this is the reason why Maimonides admits these kinds of predicables as legitimately affirmative of God. However, the issue is not whether Maimonides wanted us to be able to make such statements about God. Clearly he did. Rather, the question is, given Maimonides' account of

the meaning of these predicates with reference to God, do they tell us anything about God? Unfortunately, on Maimonides' account, they do not. In general, all statements of the form "God did A" turn out, on analysis, to be statements of the form "A is true of the world." Divine action statements have a grammatical form that suggests that they give us information about God, but on Maimonides' analysis they, in fact, only give us information about the world. Now I believe that Rabbi Spero is right in claiming that such statements should be understood to give us information in a fundamental sense about God. However, the text of the *Guide* shows that Maimonides did not share our view.

4. Among the several points of considerable interest in Rabbi Spero's article is his revival of Diesendruck's hypothesis that the objections to Maimonides' theory of negative attributes can be overcome if affirmative statements about God are understood as what Kant called "positive infinite propositions" . . . I do not mean to suggest here that Maimonides' theory of negative attributes cannot be salvaged in the way that Diesendruck and Spero suggest. Rather, I merely wish to point out that Rabbi Spero has considerable more work to do on the logical problems involved in such a position . . .

5. Finally, let me say that even if Rabbi Spero can show that there is a sense in which the God of whom Maimonides speaks is knowable, there still remains the question of whether or not the God of the philosophers is the God of the patriarchs. I have argued elsewhere . . . that a being no greater than which cannot be conceived is not the God of Israel. Maimonides believed that the God of our fathers is identical with the Prime Mover of an Aristotelian universe. I do not know for certain whether the Prime Mover is a being no greater than which can be conceived, but

*prima facie*, it would seem that a Prime Mover, whose sole activity is eternal, unchanging self contemplation, could not be identified with that being whom Jews and others call by the term "God" who created this world, gave the Torah and liberated our people from Egyptian bondage. The issue is not, as Robert Gordis suggested (JUDAISM, Winter 1973, pg. 5), that to abandon the God of the philosophers and to return to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is intended to denigrate the role of reason in religion and in life. On the contrary, I maintain that to accept an identity merely because it has been perpetuated for many years does not mean that that identity assertion is correct. If reason shows that we have varied from following the path of our ancestors in faith by accepting an erroneous judgment of our ancestors in philosophy, then, in the interest of our faith, reason dictates that we should correct our philosophy.

Princeton, N.J. NORBERT SAMUELSON

RABBI SPERO replies:

1—Certainly, Maimonides' theory of the Divine attributes and the problem of theodicy are "not totally unrelated." But only in the sense that there could be no *problem* of theodicy unless God knows particulars. They are totally unrelated in that Maimonides' theory of God's attributes does not contribute towards a *resolution* of the problem, which was my point.

2—My interpretation of Maimonides as allowing the use of relational expressions of God in "a less strict sense" is not based solely on the two texts but also upon logical arguments. I wrote, "If attributes of action are admissible as descriptions of God, relational attributes are as well, for the former can be transposed into the latter." (P. 70) Clearly, if God is the agent or cause of certain events, then the two are necessarily related as cause and effect. That Maimonides is driven

by the logic of language to accept relational expressions is demonstrated time and again by his own use of such terms. Thus, "Rather have these attributes been thought of in reference to the diverse relations that may obtain between God, may He be exalted, and the things created by Him." (I 53, Pines' translation)

In regard to the I 53 text, Pines' translation reads as follows: "It makes no difference whether these diverse attributes correspond to his actions or to diverse relations between Him and the things produced by his actions, in conformity with what we have likewise explained regarding the truth of relations and it being merely something that is in the intellect." Even if Prof. Samuelson's translation be granted, the text still constitutes clear evidence that Maimonides considered relational expressions, properly understood, on a par with action predicates. The phrase I have italicized (which I drew attention to in my note 16) is most crucial in revealing what Maimonides meant by a less strict use of relational predicates. If, as Maimonides assumed, relational predicates used in connection with God commit us to some specific ontology regarding the Deity, then they are inapplicable. But if their linguistic use refers merely to something "in thought" and not in reality, i.e., that men *think* or *feel* themselves or the universe to be related to God, then "it is more appropriate (or relational predicates) than with regard to the others that indulgence should be exercised, if it be predicted of God" (Pines' translation). Operationally, this is to agree to the use of relational predicates in a less strict sense. Friedlander's phrase, "in a less strict sense," (I 52) may be faulty as translation but is certainly correct as exegesis.

3—This is precisely the point on which we disagree. The statement, "God did A," on Maimonides' analysis, says more than simply, "A is true of the world." It not only affirms the



reality of an entity we call "God," but states that in the absence of this entity, it would not be the case that A is true of the world. Furthermore, since to do A requires power, will and knowledge, the statement implies that there is something in God which corresponds to these qualities. The entire burden of my article is to demonstrate that Maimonides' conceptual apparatus enables him to affirm this.

5—Surely, Prof. Samuelson remembers that, "Scott is the author of Waverly" is true in the sense that both *name* the same entity yet the *meaning* of "Scott" is not quite the same as the meaning of "the author of Waverly." The set of propositions that describe the God of the philosophers name the same reality as the "God of the Patriarchs." Obviously, the meanings of both sets of propositions are not identical. Yehuda Halevi was the first to draw the distinction between the God of Abraham and the God of Aristotle saying, "to the former we yearn, tasting and viewing Him, to the latter we draw near through speculation." (Kuzari IV:16) It is, of course, the distinction between the God we experience in the concrete reality of religious life and the God we attempt to talk about, coherently and systematically. But the very moment when Yehuda Halevi, himself, starts to speak of his God of Abraham, he is ineluctably involved with the God of the philosophers. For, to each generation, philosophy embodies the canons of rationality. This is our problem no less than it was Maimonides'!

Cleveland, Ohio

SHUBERT SPERO

## On Misunderstandings

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

I have noted with some surprise Eugene Fisher's comments (JUDAISM, Winter, 1973) on my article *The Death of a God* (JUDAISM, Winter, 1971)... He says that my state-

ment that for Christianity the world is "corrupt" and humanity "unredeemed" is a denial "of the Incarnation and the validity of Redemption." But, in fact, I do make reference to both these Christian dogmas, for instance, when I write: "The miracle occurred in the Incarnation. Because of it, and through his faith, man is reborn a new and pure being." However, I also ask the question: "But what happens if the act of *redemption* does not take place in fact; if, as a matter of historic experience man is not renewed and the new Adam does not appear?" I do give adequate recognition to the fact that "the Incarnation and validity of Redemption" are Christian dogma, but I do deny that the dogma has anything to do with man's historic experience. Notwithstanding Jesus, nothing proves more conclusively that man and the world have remained as unredeemed as they have ever been, than what Judaism and the Jewish people have experienced at the hand of Christianity and Christendom over many centuries. Now if we start out with "Original Sin," which can only be redeemed by the "Incarnation" etc., and if then no Redemption follows in historic reality, we are indeed left with a world "corrupt," and humanity "unredeemed."

However, why is Mr. Fisher arguing with me? In that article I analyze the writings of the Christian radical theologians. There is hardly a statement made which is not supported by some reference in the footnotes or by some literal quotation. I am mystified by his accusation that I make "charges without feeling the slightest need to offer any documentation," which he goes on to prove by quoting me: "According to the compromise, salvation applies only to the individual soul, the inner man; the world, history, remains unredeemed." The passage is, in fact, a summation of a discussion based on Troeltsch, Mircea Eliade and Bultmann, supported by quotations



from their works. The very term "compromise" is from Troeltsch; the rest of the statement is a paraphrasing of a quotation from Bultmann a few sentences before. It is incredible that Mr. Fischer could have missed it. It is true that my statement that for Kierkegaard "Faith is absurd because it is, and must be, outside of history" is made without any source reference, but again I am unable to understand how he can comment on it by writing: "Berkovits then refers to a view which he *ascribes* to Kierkegaard." Well, this is too much! I did not think it necessary to quote chapter and paragraph because anyone who has some familiarity with the writings of Kierkegaard will recognize it as the main tenor of Kierkegaard's position. In other words, the source is Kierkegaard . . . Mr. Fisher quotes from the declaration of the Second Vatican Council to disprove my understanding of the Christian position. Anyone who will go to the trouble of reading my article with intellectual honesty will, I believe, agree that the declaration is itself a fine illustration of what Troeltsch called the compromise and what Altizer, with reference to Dilthey and Troeltsch, recognized as "historicism," a product of the decomposition of Christianity. On the other hand, Jewish theologians have every right to see in it what Gordis has called the re-Judaization of Christianity.

This brings me to a point of principle. No one has a right to demand of Jewish theologians to see Christianity as Christian theologians see it. The sources of Christian teachings are no less accessible to us than they are to them. We are quite capable of studying them on our own and are free to interpret them in accordance with our own insight. Surely, Christian scholars should appreciate such a position. After all, Christianity in its entirety is based on telling us Jews that we don't know what Judaism is really about. Of course, Jewish theologians do not use their own view of Christianity ei-

ther for heaping abuse and insults on Christianity or as a basis for the persecution of Christians.

I respond briefly to the reference that Mr. Fisher makes to another article of mine which was also published in JUDAISM, (*Judaism in the Post-Christian Era*, Winter, 1966). Obviously, I am not one of those "religious traditionalists" of whom Rabbi Siegman, approvingly quoted by Mr. Fisher, says that their arguments against Jewish-Christian dialogue "rarely reveals the deep-seated fear . . . of conversionary motives . . .". In the article referred to, I explicitly state that I am convinced that the "fraternal dialogue" with Judaism for which Vatican II asks is meant to seek new contacts for the sake of missionary activities in order to replace the missionary disputations so shamelessly imposed upon the Jewish people in the past. However, nowhere in my article will anyone be able to discover the least sign of any *fear* of the missionary intentions of the Church. In my view, the whole dismal story of the Christian missionary effort among the Jews through the ages is itself the best proof that Christianity represents no spiritual challenge to Judaism. It is also my opinion that Christianity, like any other religion, has the right to go out and attempt to make converts to its heart's content, as long as it does so in an ethically acceptable manner. But in view of the long history of the barbaric inhumanity with which, in the past, the Church inflicted its missionary zeal upon us, I consider it a matter of Jewish self-respect that Jews not make themselves available for this kind of "fraternal dialogue." When I think of the style of Christian missionary activities in the State of Israel today, for instance, directed at the disadvantaged, the poor and the hungry, those not yet fully rehabilitated by Israel's heroic undertaking of curing the maltreated body and the violated soul of the Jewish People, I cannot help thinking of the

many exiles in Christian lands, exploited and betrayed, often starved into "the true religion;" the Dominican monks going about among them, holding in one hand the cross and in the other bread, offering—with true Christian love—bread to the starving children for the acceptance of the cross.

As to the rest of the points which I make in that article, I do not believe that they are meaningfully met by trying to rule them out of court by the stereotype that they represent the opinions of an "Orthodox Theologian." Mr. Fisher's reliance on Rabbi Siegman's view that the "Church speaks with many voices" is irrelevant to my thesis. It has nothing to do with a discussion in substance. Does he, or for that matter, does Rabbi Siegman really believe that the discovery that there are many different opinions and positions within Christianity is such a deeply esoteric truth of a more enlightened humanity that a somewhat benighted "Orthodox Theologian" would be incapable of perceiving its "redeeming" significance?

Skokie, Illinois

ELIEZER BERKOVITS

#### TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

Liberal Christian theologians seldom quote the gospel; mostly they quote each other. Or else they ascribe Christian deficiencies and misunderstandings to anything and anybody other than their Holy Writ.

Eugene Fisher gives a splendid illustration of gospel-less Christianity. In a lengthy paper on *Jewish Misunderstandings of Christianity*, he manages to quote the New Testament just once, ascribing an opinion to Paul in 2 Thess. 2:12, and this quotation does not even sustain his argument since it is generally accepted that 2 Thessalonians is not by Paul.

He criticises Rabbi Berkovits for not documenting a statement that Christianity is an otherworldly reli-

gion. Does he need to document it? Is "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36) not sufficiently well known? Or not sufficiently authoritative? And there is no dearth of statements of similar ilk (John 3:5, 12; Matt. 5:3, 10; Luke 10:20; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:50f; 2 Cor. 4:18, 5:2; Gal 6:8 and numerous other examples).

The celebrated Bonhoeffer made a sad attempt to present Christianity as oriented to this world. In *A Letter from Prison*, dated 27 June, 1944, he wrote "But is this (otherworldly concern) really the distinctive feature of Christianity as proclaimed in the gospels and St. Paul? I am sure it is not . . . I must now collect some evidence from the New Testament to support my contentions." He wrote another dozen letters but none of them featured the evidence he sought. Hardly surprising.

In Fisher's view, who and what is responsible for the long list of what he considers to be Jewish misunderstandings of Christianity? Wellhausen, Mendelssohn, Buber, Paul's misunderstood (of course!) use of *sarx* and *soma*, Augustine's attack on Pelagianism, Protestant polemics against Catholicism and vice versa; anything at all other than the gospel itself.

Whence comes the delusion that only Christians can be saved? From Cyprian, he says. Are Jews so deaf that they have not heard 100 generations of Christians intoning "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6)? And similar sentiments (John 3:18, 36; 8:24; 15:5, 6; Matt. 10:33; Luke 12:9; Acts 4:12; Rom. 6:23 and many more from Paul-type sources).

Why should Jews imagine (wrongly, he claims) that Christianity is basically ascetic? Blame monasticism, pietism, Protestant polemic, Manichees and Jansenists. What! Even in the limited area of sexual and marital asceticism do we not know that Jesus, John the Baptist and Paul were childless and celibate? Or that the New Testament

praises this sort of thing? (a small selection: Matt. 19:10-12; Luke 18:29 and much in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and elsewhere.)

It will not do to protect the Christian Blueprint by blaming secondary sources as responsible for misunderstandings and deficiencies. All the uncomfortable positions that Christianity must jettison are explicit or implicit in the New Testament... Liberal theologians must confront their gospel. If situations are too difficult to explain away, then the solution is not to pretend that the New Testament does not exist, or to invoke secondary sources, or to claim that Jews keep misunderstanding Christianity. Either the deficiencies must be acknowledged and overruled as unacceptable, or the gospel entirely rewritten, or else abandoned altogether.

*Johannesburg, South Africa* S. LEVIN

#### TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

I have an aversion to anything called "typically Jewish..." It evokes many painful memories of accusations by implication, generalization and over-simplification. But this is exactly what WE ARE charged with here. "What was, and is, missing in much of the Jewish understanding of Christianity, is a sense of the complexity of Christian belief, the variety of practice, and the nuances and the historical context...."

The implication of the comparison between Hegelian German-Protestant nationalistic philosophy (Christian Germany the pinnacle of man's evolution) and the historically co-incident rise of the *Wissenschaft des Judentum* (prophetic ethics the pinnacle of human achievement) leads him to the conclusion that here are the roots of Zionism. The canard is implied that there is an ideological relationship between Zionism and Nazism. Even "the Jewish quest for ethical excellence" is viewed with suspicion, because it would reduce Christianity (I

do not know how) "to the level of an aberrant offshoot from normative Judaism."

Since this "position paper" intended to offer only some examples of popular misunderstandings, it would have been wise to select these examples with more circumspection. Isaac ben Abraham of Trokki (or Troki) was *not* a Jewish apologist, but a Karaite scholar, (The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia) a Karaite author and controversialist (The Encyclopedia of Jewish Knowledge). "... what would happen if a Christian were to analyze Judaism from the perspective of the Karaites and Franz Rosenzweig." (WHY ROSENZWEIG?)

Speaking of POPULAR misunderstandings: The popularity of Ahad Haam may be well attested and the influence of Bahya ibn Pakuda on Jewish theologians was, and perhaps still is, unquestionable; but, I must sadly confess, to the members of my bridge club they are completely unknown. Even I had some difficulty recalling Nathan of Gaza. On the other hand, the list of the most relevant Jewish thinkers, theologians and authors ignored in this position paper is endless. Julius Guttman (e.g.) is rejected as one-sided, in a footnote. Leo Baeck, Abraham J. Heschel, Yehezkel Kaufman (just to name a few) are not even mentioned.

However, my most serious objection to this otherwise scholarly effort concerns the over-simplification of the Jewish point of view. "The arguments from the Jewish side, when stripped of particulars," usually run like this according to Dr. Fisher: Jesus was really not such a bad guy at all; Paul was the bad guy.

How much over-simplification is needed to eliminate the "communication gap between us"? A little more respect for each other's understanding would promote any Jewish-Christian dialogue.

*Berkeley, Cal.*

GEORGE VIDA

MR. FISHER *replies*:

At the outset, I must confess to a certain mixture of emotions in approaching this task. For the reactions, especially that of Dr. Berkovits, raise not only the academic questions which I dealt with in my paper, but the much more difficult theological dilemmas of history centering around anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. . . .

First, I did not intend my paper to be in any way an "apology" or a defense of the two millennia of Christian history which lead up to Auschwitz. Christianity, both as a faith and as an historical movement, stands condemned in those countless atrocities. Its only proper posture can be the admission of its complicity and its guilt. And as Dr. Berkovits so aptly reminds us, this "long history of barbaric inhumanity" constitutes not merely a "past" event that can be safely ignored . . . but a dynamic which must be openly dealt with in utter honesty in any dialogue.

Yet I would maintain now, as I did in my paper, that to allow past or even present history to be the final word between us would be a tragic mistake for Jews and Christians alike. If the Holocaust represents the final judgment of history, then the God whom both Christians and Jews persist in proclaiming is, indeed, dead. If Christians are to be forever barred from the possibility of *teshuvah*, then Auschwitz has the final, tragic laugh on mankind, a position I refuse to accept. History is redeemable. I can offer no "proof" of this save the testimony of Scripture (a point on which both testaments strongly agree). Like Abraham Heschel and Elie Wiesel, I must take it on faith . . .

To be at all fruitful, the Jewish-Christian dialogue demands an act of faith on both sides—perhaps more in the God who saves than in men. All men, I would maintain against Dr. Berkovits, are redeemable—even Christians—even if we can only perceive

the mystery, as he himself states so beautifully, from "the threshold." . . .

For empirical evidence of at least the feasibility of honest dialogue, I can do no better than point out to Dr. Berkovits the two articles in the Spring issue of JUDAISM which deal with it as it goes on in Israel today. Likewise, I would point out to him that the sociological categories of Troeltsch are by no means sufficient basis for his conclusion that the Second Vatican Council is irrelevant to a discussion of what *Christians* believe. Vatican II spoke definitively for a majority of the world's Christians. To ignore it is hardly an example of "intellectual honesty." (I would also offer the view that Troeltsch's view of the necessary interrelationship of Church and society has been somewhat oversimplified by Berkovits, who would perhaps be closer to the simpler categories of Niebuhr.

Dr. Gordis, on the other hand, shows great insight in regarding major aspects of current Church renewal as a return to the deep Jewish roots which the Church, from the time of the Fathers, so often sought to deny. One can see the movement in the shift from Paul, who sought to allow non-Jews to enter the community (not "Christianity" since it hadn't been invented yet) without following the Law in all its details, to St. John Chrysostom, who condemned the Law and Judaism as such.

Much of current Christian thinking is the result of modern Biblical studies, whose rigorous objectivity has forced a reappraisal of many a "traditional" theological category, by rediscovering the simple truth that the NT is a *Jewish* work and reflects both the Hebrew Scriptures and the many vital forms of Judaism current in the 1st Century of the common era.

It is interesting that neither Dr. Berkovits nor Dr. Levin seems at all aware of such complex historical dynamics. The former gives the impression that he would like to forget that Jesus and

the Apostles were—and remained—Jews: “Christianity in its entirety is based on telling us Jews that we don’t know what Judaism is really about.” Once again an important truth has been obscured by oversimplified application. Dr. Levin’s listing of passages likewise raises an important issue. But as it stands it is both futile and unanswerable. For he gives no indication of what—if any—hermeneutical principles or Biblical methodology he intends to follow in exegeting those passages. . . .

Rabbi Vida, who calls me to account for oversimplifying modern Judaism is, of course, quite justified. Generalization, the attempt to discern trends and patterns in the complexities of reality, is obviously both the *raison d’être* and the great danger in any attempt to interpret the history of thought. It should have been apparent from my paper that I considered it useful only to the extent that it shed light on certain aspects within the academic community, the reader’s “bridge clubs” notwithstanding. In this sense I would agree that the title may have been unfortunate. . . .

Only minor clarifications remain. First, I did not, as Rabbi Vida states, imply an “ideological relationship” between Nazism and Zionism but, rather, a relationship between the rise of European nationalism and nationalism among European Jewry. I indicated only that this relationship was “important” for the understanding of Zionism, which it is. A fuller study of the topic would begin, most likely, with Napoleon’s call for a new Sanhedrin (see my paper, footnote #3). Secondly, I did not view the prophetic “quest for ethical excellence” with any “suspicion” whatsoever. I merely pointed to the historical fact that Geiger (among others) used it apologetically. At the time, I also pointed out my admiration for modern Israel’s ability to infuse its national policy with a strong ethical spirit in reference to capital punishment. The Spring is-

sue of JUDAISM gave striking new evidence of this, especially in the article on “the waging of war.” I could only wish that this country would show such restraint. And perhaps there is a deeper significance here than I thought at first, for as Franklin Littell has pointed out: “There is a direct line, symbolic if not logical, from Auschwitz to Mylai. For a gentile society’s treatment of the Jewish people has become the litmus test as to how it will treat any helpless, defenseless, unassimilatable minority that persists in counter-culture.” (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 1972, p. 862.)

Here I must return once again to Dr. Berkovits, who seems to accept the idea that Christians believe in Original Sin but deny the possibility that they could also believe in the Incarnation and the Redemption. The point at hand is not whether these events took place, but whether Christians *believe* they did, and the consequences which such belief has for Christians. The consequence of Christ’s death and resurrection is—for all Christians—that man and his history are saved. This is spelled out in the doctrine of God’s “universal salvific will.” For Dr. Berkovits to deny this is his prerogative. For a Christian to deny it is heresy, which was my original point. . . .

Finally, a small point of irony. The reactions themselves may prove a better “defense” of my thesis than I myself could manage. For it would seem that the only Christians that can be mustered against my interpretation of the “pluriformity” of Christianity are (1) individuals (no statements from organized Church bodies such as Vatican II or the World Council of Churches are, we are told, admissible) and (2) Protestants; i.e., Bonhoeffer, Bultmann, Altizer, Troeltsch, Eliade, Dilthey and Kierkegaard. So maybe I should go back to Rosenzweig and Isaac of Troki after all . . .

*Detroit, Michigan*

EUGENE FISHER

FROM EULOGY TO EPITAPH

*Review-Essay* by EMANUEL RACKMAN

*Jewish Law in Ancient Israel: Selected Essays with an Introduction.* By  
HAIM H. COHN. KTAV Pub. House, Inc., New York, N.Y. 1971.  
259 pp. + xxxiv. \$12.50.

CAN IT BE ARROGANCE ALONE THAT PROMPTS this reviewer to make a critical evaluation of a book edited and, in substantial part, written by one of Israel's most distinguished jurists and scholars? Haim H. Cohn is a member of Israel's Supreme Court, a master of Jewish and comparative law, and exceedingly well read in the philosophy of law. One stands in awe of the credentials which are his. And what he has assembled in this volume are primarily his own essays (about half the contents) and a number of other essays by jurists whose scholarship is equally impeccable. What fault can one possibly find with the array of talent and the display of erudition that the book provides? Yet the very selection of the essays and much of their argument make one feel that the editor is a special pleader. He wants, once and for all time, to dispel the hope that Jewish law can ever serve modern Israel. He begins with eulogy—he has the profoundest respect for the achievements of Jews in the area of law, but he moves to epitaph—he holds that their law belongs to a dead past. Its protagonists, he claims, are not logically consistent, nor are they even properly prepared for the program they profess to support. Thus, a scholarly work becomes an instrument for propaganda in what is already a controversy of major significance in that young republic whose ambivalence between its ties with the past and its craving to create a new identity can be detected in many areas. And the battle is also raging with regard to Jewish law. Shall Israel's legal order be tied to Israel's past and be a further development of that past, or shall Israel create a new legal order with little or no regard for the ancestral heritage? Haim Cohn's colleague, Justice Moshe Silberg, holds the former view; Haim Cohn, the latter. And the volume of essays that he has edited is meant to be more than informative; it is designed to inter with due respect.

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EMANUEL RACKMAN is rabbi of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue and professor of Judaic Studies at CUNY.



## I

The title of the book may be misleading. Though called *Jewish Law in Ancient and Modern Israel*, it is not a handbook of Jewish law. It has no chapters devoted to property and personal status, to torts and crimes, to contracts and trade regulation, or to a score of other topics with which Jewish law deals. Perhaps the title was meant to convey the impression that from the essays one would be able to glean some information about the role and status of Jewish law in Jewish society—ancient and modern. Whatever one learns about the rules of law themselves is purely coincidental. However, it must be borne in mind that none of the essays was written especially for this volume. Most of them were published earlier in sundry periodicals. And, it would appear, the editor assembled them with an eye to demonstrating that the great role once enjoyed by Jewish law in ancient and medieval Jewish society is no longer available to it.

His introduction does not make this point. On the other hand, as a general introduction to Jewish law itself, it is a masterpiece. It is lucid and concise, and provides the reader with basic information regarding the development of Jewish law, its sources, its basic norms, its methodology, and its importance for both legal history generally and modern Israel. Much of this introduction was taken from an essay prepared by Justice Cohn for the *Festschrift* in honor of Roscoe Pound, America's great philosopher of law, and, as such, was intended for the world-wide community of jurists, Jewish and non-Jewish. It conveys a very positive image of the great scope and depth of the legal heritage of the Jewish people and would be an admirable preface to a volume purporting to deal with Jewish law in the past and in the present. Writing for non-Jews, the Justice certainly tries to convey the best impression. He is critical of the excessive formalism of Jewish law and does not try to justify it, as does his colleague, Justice Moshe Silberg, in his book *This Is The Way of Talmud*. However, the introduction is highly to be recommended to all who are unfamiliar with the sea of Talmudic and post-Talmudic literature.

Several other essays are also very informative. The one by M. Chigier on "The Rabbinical Courts in the State of Israel" is a detailed account of the historical background that gave rise to these courts, the gradually diminishing scope of their jurisdiction, and, indirectly, some information on the substantive and procedural law that these courts apply. It is not a systematic presentation of the Jewish law of personal status, although the reader can glean from the discussion some of the rules which make the law so controversial in modern Israel. It does appear that, because of the hostility of so many Israelis to this law, modern Israel discriminates against these courts by comparison with its more hospitable



attitude toward non-Jewish ecclesiastical courts, a point on which Amnon Rubinstein, the professed "secularist," agrees. But this is a problem for Israel's legislature and not one that arises from Jewish law itself or that can be solved by it.

Professor Rubinstein's essay on "Law and Religion in Israel" also has very little to say about Jewish law. He admits his bias against the religious establishment and bemoans the inadequacy of freedom *from* religion and religious rites in Israel. However, he deals almost exclusively with the legislative enactments of Israel—and not Biblical, Talmudic, or post-Talmudic law. His conclusions are that there is, in Israel, no established religion in the ordinary sense; that Judaism, as a religion, does not enjoy preferential treatment in Israeli law; that religion, as such, is incorporated into Israeli law in the sphere of personal status; that the organization of religious communities is regulated by law with religious services financed by the government; and that as far as Judaism is concerned the Orthodox have a monopoly.

He argues that freedom from religion and religious rites exists only to a limited degree. In this connection, the only instance which he cites that is unequivocal is the freedom to produce pigs. One wonders why the "secularists" attribute this prohibition to "religion" unless every rule they resent must be so regarded. The prohibition of pig production is no more a matter of "religion" than are the national days of mourning. All derive from tragic events in Jewish history, and just as many "irreligious" Jews in Israel may shun German music for reasons that have nothing to do with God or Revelation, so Jewish history has yielded many observances and taboos whose credentials are Jewish history rather than faith in God or commitment to His will. The prohibition of pig production is one such instance.

If anything, one would have expected Professor Rubinstein—who is very familiar with religious freedom in the United States—to have noted that the observant in Israel have limited religious freedom. In the United States, a Sabbath observer can successfully complain against an employer who denies him employment because he refuses to work on the Sabbath, while an Israeli who is denied employment at a hotel for similar reasons has no remedy available to him. Instead of exaggerating the need for more freedom from religion, Rubinstein might have pondered how real is the free exercise of religion in Israel when those who want to observe may not be able to find employment.

Izhak Englard's essay on "The Relationship Between Religion and State in Israel" is far more philosophical than Rubinstein's. In his opinion, much of the tension in Israel is due to the fact that two Leviathans are competing for "primacy,"—for sovereignty—the State and the Halakhah. He sees the need for more "fruitful dialogue." None can gainsay that dialogue will help, but it is the unique contribution of Judaism to the his-

tory of western civilization that there shall always be tension between the authority of the state and the authority of conscience. In the words of Professor Jacob Talmon, what Judaism did for humanity at large is to make it question eternally "the legitimacy of power." Unfortunately, however, the debate in Israel is not on the philosophical level but, most often, as Englund concedes, "in the sphere of personal status," with emotionalism, instead of reason, riding in the saddle. This essay of Englund makes some constructive suggestions to the religionists in Israel, but it is Englund's other essay that prompts this reviewer to charge Cohn with seeking to write the epitaph to traditional Jewish law in Israel. It is entitled "The Problem of Jewish Law in a Jewish State" and reflects Cohn's own views which he had expressed tangentially in his own contributions to the volume.

Neither one of them can see a way in which a secular state can adopt a system of law whose foundations are religious, without compromising the secular character of that state or offending the religious commitment of those who are the guardians of that law—its subjects and its masters. In addition, they are critical of the doctors of Jewish law for their failure adequately to prepare that law for "reception" by a modern state. With the criticism one can hardly disagree. But they are aware of the opposing views of Moshe Silberg, Menahem Elon, Nahum Rakover and others who feel strongly that traditional Jewish law can play an important role even in a secular state. Why did Cohn include none of their essays in the volume? Elon's point of view Englund rejected in a footnote (p. 153). His position was accorded no more attention than that! Silberg's position is rejected in a paragraph because of Englund's questionable premise that, when a community legislates, its legislation must be regarded either as secular law or as religious law but it cannot be both. The basis for his premise is some Rabbinic opinion which is as doctrinaire as his own. Naturally, the proponents of extreme opposite views always reject the possibility of compromise.

To one less doctrinaire, compromise need not be ruled out. Why cannot legislation of a democratic state reflect, at one and the same time, the views of secularists and religionists? The mere fact that they differ with regard to the nature of the source of the law—divine revelation or social expediency—or with regard to the rationale for obedience to that law, does not preclude agreement on what the legislation ought to provide.

For one trained in American jurisprudence this is a very familiar phenomenon. Justices of the Supreme Court may agree on a result, though one Justice may deem natural law as its justification while another may feel that only social expediency lies at the heart of the matter. One Justice may belong to the teleological school while another iden-

tifies with the sociological school. And what is true of judges can also be true of legislators.

More than a quarter century ago, Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan wrote that the new state of Israel, with the blessing of the Halakhah, could—and would—make women competent to serve as witnesses and as judges. Yet during a very famous trial in the United States in the 1950s, when a divorced wife was permitted to testify against her husband that while they were wedded he was a communist, it occurred to me that no Jewish legislator, sensitive to the Jewish conception of family and the right to privacy, especially of husband and wife, would permit spouses to testify against each other when such permission would deter other spouses from confiding in each other lest one day they betray each other. Thus, on the one hand, the Halakhah could give recognition to the emancipation of women in the modern age and, at the same time, the state would conserve one Halakhic value and safeguard the confidential character of communications between husbands and wives. Bar-Ilan was not obsessed by what Cohn (p. 2) and Englard seem to regard as irreconcilable—secular law and Halakhah. Cohn even pokes fun (p. 2) at those religionists who cannot see how they contradict themselves when they want to prevent the state from encroaching on Jewish law, at the same time that they want the state to enact and promulgate Jewish law as it is. Like Englard, he is obsessed with problems of “reception,” as were the thirteen states of the United States in 1776 when they “received” British law as it was in 1776. But they forget that if there was cooperative legislative endeavor, transcending political party considerations and a common desire to base the new legal order on historic roots, Jewish law might have an uninterrupted history and, paraphrasing Holmes, a page of that history would be worth a volume of logical consistency and ideological uniformity.

Cohn's volume does include a fine essay by Menahem Elon on “Jewish Law and Modern Medicine.” It should help doctors—especially pathologists—to appreciate the fact that even the rules which they resent reflect the loftiest humanist values. But the essay is very much out of place in the volume and its author should have been represented by other works that he published with regard to Englard's and Rubinstein's positions.

## II

However, it is the editor himself who, as author of half the contents of the volume, is responsible for the total impact of the book. And while he wrote an introduction which is an encomium on Jewish law, his own essays which are included in the volume induce considerable misgivings.

Every editor is entitled to his biases and this reviewer has several of his own. But when the bias becomes supportive of a time-honored

canard of Christian theologians, the net result must be one that even Justice Cohn cannot cherish. For millennia, Christians have argued that the Old Testament is a record of brutal legislation which subsequent prophets and, especially, Jesus and his apostles humanized. When Cohn holds an equally negative conception of the allegedly revealed law which his Jewish forebears improved upon, it becomes difficult to challenge the claim of Christians that Jews made the improvements that they did because of the influence of the New Testament. Cohn will argue that what his forebears did, they did even before Jesus, and it is their humanity that is reflected in the New Testament. But the bad image of the Old Testament would remain uncorrected. And we would have an interesting paradox. Roman law was humanized by Stoicism—not Christianity, as most scholars will attest. But Christianity will be credited with the humanization of Jewish law! In this respect, the position of the Jewish tradition is at least equally reasonable and, certainly, more comforting, and that position is that whatever development there was in Jewish law was stimulated by mandates and insights of the Old Testament itself. And the progressive “doctors of the law” were not rationalizing their reforms by reference to verses in the Pentateuch, but were, in fact, goaded by those verses to do what they did. This was certainly the case in connection with the institution of Jewish slavery and it also was so in connection with capital punishment and *lex talionis*. Both because of Biblical verses and pure reason, the Rabbis insisted that an “eye for an eye” could mean only a monetary equivalent. One of the most popular arguments (immortalized in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*) is that the eye of the tortfeasor could not possibly be taken in retribution because one could never be sure that only an eye would be taken—death might ensue and, thus, it would be a life and an eye for an eye, and that the Torah did not sanction! To make the law of Moses barbaric and the law of the Rabbis humane is to render a great service to Christianity and a great disservice to Jewish pride. And Justice Cohn, who may have personal reasons for hating the law of Moses, ought not let his sense of personal hurt show. Yet it does in his own essays, as it does in his selection of the essays of others.

On the one hand, he has included one of his own essays—one of the longest—on the trial of Jesus, in which he makes out a very good case for the thesis that the Jews never tried Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The only connection between the argument of this essay and the title of the book is that he refers to many rules of Jewish law—substantial and procedural. Thus, a reader is incidentally taught something about Jewish law. One would have preferred a systematic presentation of the Jewish law of crimes and criminal procedure. But if the vehicle is what it is—an analysis of

1. See “Reflections on the Trial of Jesus,” in JUDAISM, Vol. 20, No. 1, Winter, 1971, pp. 10–23.

the Gospels in the light of some of these rules—then at least one gets the rules indirectly. However, his essay on the penology of the Talmud is precisely the kind of essay to gladden the heart of Christian theologians. The Rabbis were the valiant knights who saved Jews from Old Testament cruelty! And even more disturbing is his essay on the secularization of divine law, the opening chapter of the book.

Justice Cohn does not contend that there is a universal law which would be applicable to legal development in all societies. Sometimes the “divinization” of secular law is an earlier stage than the “secularization” of divine law. Yet in Jewish law—and some other legal systems—he sees a process from divine law to its “humanization,” and then from “humanization” to “secularization” which, it would appear, is the desideratum for modern Israel. While the essay contains much interesting and enlightening material, its aim and thesis are confusing.

Secularization deprives the law altogether of its divinity. But why must even a secular state deny its jurists the right to entertain conceptions of justice which are transcendental, or rooted in natural law and theology, or based on Platonic idealism, or based on Revelation? The legislator and jurist can function in a secular state within the state's constitutional mandates, and within the authority which they are permitted to exercise, without making their philosophy of justice explicit. Indeed, as Cardozo well argued, every judge has his personal philosophy which is an important factor in the decision-making process. And no secular democratic state ever seeks to formalize and finalize what these personal philosophies must be. Thus I, as legislator or jurist, may act with respect to a law dealing with abortions within the area of my authority, with a view that a pregnant woman is the sole arbiter of the fate of her foetus, or that life is sacred by natural law or divine law, or that there is an explicit will of God to which I owe blind obedience. The legislators voting on a proposed enactment may be motivated by any one, or more, philosophical or religious considerations in addition to social and economic ones, and the judge interpreting the law will also bring to his decision, not only legislative mandates and earlier precedents but, also, his personal philosophy, as he inevitably must as a thinking man with a personal philosophy of his own. No judge, even in a secular democratic state, acts like a computer and is devoid of a personal philosophy of nature or of man or even of religion. Thus, the United States, which has maximum commitment to the separation of church and state, does not examine the hearts of legislators and jurists to make certain that they entertain no notions of the divinity of life, or the divinity of justice or law, or even the divine source of whatever authority they exercise within the state. Their authority is from the people, but nothing stops them from believing that that authority has come to them from God, in accordance with a traditional Jewish blessing.

In connection with abortions, traditional Jewish law also reflected the same diversity of personal philosophies and tensions. On the one hand, one was not guilty of murder if one aborted a foetus—a foetus was not regarded as alive, in Jewish criminal law, although the Jewish law of inheritance did regard the foetus as alive so that it could inherit its father who died before the child emerged from its mother's womb. To enhance respect for life, abortions were morally prohibited unless the mother's life or health was in jeopardy. Yet one rabbi did not hesitate to permit the abortion of a foetus illegitimately conceived to eliminate the possibility that, when born, that being would suffer the stigma of bastardy. Who can isolate and identify the factors which make the rabbis formulate such progressive rules! I am sure that they pondered as many possibilities as modern legislators do. Some were more dogmatic than others. Some were more mindful than others of economic, social, and philosophical considerations. But that is always the case. Judges and legislators act within their authority, but what they believe and cherish also plays a part in the decision-making process though it remains unexpressed.

Justice Cohn has such a deep bias against the religious foundations of Jewish law that he wants no part of Revelation nor of any preoccupation of Jewish jurists with God's will. He is a humanist, proud of what his people have done with their law, despite God. Thus, "secularization" is the ultimate and "divinization" is the *bête noire*. Yet his own essays reveal how aware he is that the very process by which Jewish law and equity were continuously humanized was due to the very notion that Jewish jurists were motivated to do what was right in God's eyes. But his hostility to religion prompts him so to abuse the term "divine law" that one rarely knows in what sense he is using it.

"Divine law" is a term used by Aquinas to describe the law which man, by reason alone, would not promulgate. That law is dogmatic, and even if a secular state should incorporate it into its legal system, it would be very confusing to call it secular law. In his classification, Aquinas would not have said that the divine law thus becomes positive law. And in Israel, the fact that the secular state has social and political reasons for permitting some divine law to be enforced in the rabbinical courts does not secularize it. It remains divine law, and those who favor it are not guilty of any inconsistency when they want the state to enact and promulgate such legislation.

In Jewish sources, the term "divine law" is rendered by the word *d'oraita* but its meaning is not that of Aquinas. It includes all mandates that, by tradition, were revealed to Moses. Justice Cohn (p. 3) is right when he says that Jewish law will not countenance the nullification of these laws by a secular non-Jewish state, but he also knows that there

are almost none with regard to which the Jewish community is impotent to legislate. Justice Cohn cites the Jewish law of inheritance as an illustration which the ruling of a non-Jewish state can never affect. But as recent an authority as Chief Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog published proposals for the revision of this law—particularly insofar as it affects women. His nullification of “divine law” would also be “divine law,” according to Cohn, although it is palpably man-made, altogether rabbinic in origin. That is why Cohn most often uses the term “divine law” as applicable to the totality of the Written and Oral Law.

Yet, what makes all of this Jewish law “divine” can only be a presumption that the exercise of all judicial and legislative functions in Jewish law is under God. Thus, all new legislation, court decisions, and administrative regulation, is divine law. Even the suspension or annulment of revealed law is, for the religious believer, divine law. The legislation of a popularly elected parliament in Israel and Justice Cohn’s decisions with regard to that legislation can also be divine law. The only “secularization” conceivable beyond this is to deny the presumption that the legislator or judge is acting under God. Yet, if two groups of jurists cherish Jewish law, and their only difference is that one group is creative within it under God and the other is creative without thought of God, is the difference between them an insuperable bar to cooperation? One brings to mind Americans who pledge allegiance to their flag and the republic for which it stands—and some add the words “under God” while others do not add these words. Do they, therefore, find it impossible to share a common loyalty to their country and to serve it with all their hearts?

Perhaps Justice Cohn is overreacting to extremists in Israel who want an all-or-nothing commitment to the Halakhah. And, in his own overreaction, he must seek total secularization or nothing. But to a more objective, reasonable, American, for example, the feuding is symptomatic of hostilities and resentments in the psyches of the feuding elements and the *korbon*—the victim—is the legal heritage of the Jewish people.

Perhaps from the Diaspora will come the more objective approach, until those in Zion overcome their personal frustrations and political animosities and permit the Torah to come forth from there again.

Mention should be made, in closing, of one brief essay by Reuven Yaron on “The Goring Ox In Near Eastern Laws” which is most enlightening. It illustrates how important is the study of comparative ancient law for our understanding of both the Written and Oral Law. This is an area of research which will attract much attention in the future, even as comparisons with the later Roman Law has engaged scholars in the past.





## Not Much About the Jews

*The Columbia History of the World.* Edited by JOHN A. GARRATY and PETER GAY. Harper & Row. New York, 1972. 1166pp. \$20.00.

*Reviewed by* NORMAN ROTH

THE APPEARANCE of any new general reference aid in the field of history is always a welcome addition to the, surprisingly, all-too-limited selection of such books. The present work, edited by two distinguished historians and representing the joint efforts of forty current and former Columbia University scholars in history and related fields, is a particularly interesting attempt to demonstrate that "the sum of human knowledge of the past could be brought together" by the faculty of a single university, as Columbia's President McGill describes it in his foreword. To what extent they have, or have not, succeeded in this perhaps somewhat presumptuous undertaking should be left for the reviews that will no doubt appear in the various historical journals. What may be of interest to the readers of JUDAISM, however, is a look at the treatment of the place of Jews in world history in the various sections of this work.

Until very recently, it has been common totally to ignore Jews and Jewish contributions in most general historical writing. That this has not been altogether due to a lack of available materials in English is obvious. However, due perhaps in no small measure to the great work and thorough scholarship (general as well as Jewish) of Salo W. Baron, this situation is slowly changing. Unfortunately, Baron (emeritus professor of Jewish history at Columbia and, for many years, of course, head of the department there) is not represented in the work. Somewhat more

surprisingly, neither is the current head of the department, Professor Zvi Ankori. However, there is a generally excellent survey chapter on "The Jews in Medieval Europe" by Gerson D. Cohen, currently professor of Jewish history at the Jewish Theological Seminary, as well as its Chancellor, whose valuable translation of Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah: The Book of Tradition*, with profound introductory essays and notes, has already established his scholarly reputation. Dr. Cohen has done a remarkably fine job of condensing and presenting the highlights and major trends of Jewish history from the end of the Roman Empire to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. In the face of the all-too-common generalizations about the exclusive restriction of medieval Jews to moneylending and slave trading, it is important to note his corrective statement that "the occupational distribution of pre-Crusade Jewry ran a gamut of pursuits." Without falling prey to the morbidities of what Baron has so aptly called the "lachrymose view of Jewish history," Cohen adequately summarizes the persecutions and expulsions of the various Jewish communities in the Middle Ages. It is good that he does so, particularly with regard to the Crusades, since Professor John H. Mundy, in his chapter on "The Late Middle Ages," has, for some strange reason, chosen to ignore the violent anti-Jewish outbursts and massacres of the Crusades—neatly sidestepping the issue with the ambiguous comment: "Anti-Jewish outbreaks often accompanied the attempts around 1100 of urban mercantile and ministerial groups to break the power of their princes." (Generally, however, the few references to Jews in this chapter are

fair and at least more or less accurate.)

Unfortunately, only one paragraph is devoted in Cohen's chapter to the history of the Jews in Europe *after* 1492. This is, by the way, the last significant reference to the Jews in world history that we meet for the remainder of the book.

Dr. Cohen has also contributed a short, but important, chapter on "The Jews in the Arab World." Beginning with a brief survey of the Gaonic period, this chapter outlines the major developments of Jewish history, especially in Moslem Spain, with a brief reference to the cultural contributions in poetry and philosophy. Perhaps it is "chauvinistic pride" that would have preferred here somewhat fuller treatment of the significant influence—especially of Maimonides and Ibn Gabirol—on medieval philosophical thought in general. Nor, perhaps, is enough said about the tremendously important contributions of the Jews in Moslem Spain to translation and scientific discoveries. Some stressing of the significant Jewish contributions in these and related cultural areas is necessary to offset the distorted picture that is so often presented (and here again, Professor Mundy, in his chapter on "The High Middle Ages," seems to be guilty) that the Church was the sole force in preserving, transmitting and stimulating culture in the Middle Ages.

Elias Bickerman is a highly respected scholar famous for his work on the Maccabees and Hellenistic history, generally. He is credited with being the sole author of the entire section on "The Ancient Near East" (where there is surprisingly no reference to the ancient Hebrews), and as co-author of the sections on "Classical Antiquity: the Jews and the Greeks," and "The Romans." The collaborator

on these last sections is Morton Smith—and from the style and tone of the writing, one may assume that, in fact, Smith bears the major responsibility for these chapters. Unfortunately, one finds here numerous statements that are not only of debatable historical accuracy—but that also seem to have been written from a point of view that might best be characterized as iconoclastic and polemical.

An example is the assertion that, while "the 'essential historicity' of the legends about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is still defended by determined believers, . . . a stronger case can be made for the view that these were legends about the founders of Palestinian shrines . . ." (p. 140). In the first place, it is difficult to understand precisely whom he is castigating with the term "determined believers." Questions of personal belief and devotion do not (or certainly should not) enter into historical analysis. The view that ascribes certain of the material in the Bible to "legends about the founders of Palestinian shrines" is, of course, familiar to every student of the Bible. The basic exposition of this view is that of Albrecht Alt. While this is a perfectly acceptable hypothesis, it is only that; it has no "stronger claim" to authority than, say, the views of scholars like William Albright or John Bright, who *do* support the "essential historicity" of much of the Genesis material (and who are, presumably, not to be charged with being "determined believers").

Other statements display questionable taste, such as the totally unwarranted attack on the Psalms. After recognizing that the Psalms are the "daily devotional reading of pious Jews and Christians," and noting (whether correctly or not) that "perhaps no other book has done so much to shape the Western mind," he then proceeds to car-

icaturize them thus: "They make up a handbook of the spiritual life, constantly suggesting that the real world is a world of enemies from which the righteous man should turn to conversation with his god, i.e., to mild schizophrenia." (p. 168). Such examples of wit (neither humorous nor "shocking"—but, rather, displaying poor judgment) have no place in historical writing. The function of an historian is to present reasonably considered, and substantiated, views of factual material. His personal religious biases and prejudices belong properly to another genre.

The author's discussion of early Christian history is characterized by further questionable interpretation, such as his story of the "persecution" of early Christians in Jerusalem by "Temple authorities," which resulted in many Christians fleeing the city. Such a view would have been scarcely tenable in the early 1900's, and few Church historians would accept it at all today, any more than they would the fascinating assertion that Paul was among the group that played a prominent part in the "Jerusalem persecution" (p. 218).

As mentioned previously, the history of the Jews ends in this book with 1492. Perhaps this explains the peculiar historical inaccuracy of the statement that "Sephardic Jews migrated from Spain and Portugal" to the American colonies (p. 673). (Of course, there were no longer Jews in Spain at all, and most of the Sephardic immigrants came, not from Portugal, but from Brazil, the Netherlands, and even England.) There is no further mention of Jews in America, except for a brief note that they were active in the garment industry in New York. (One can well imagine the cries of outrage that would have

been forthcoming if blacks had been similarly ignored.)

The sum total of references to the existence of Jews in Europe after the Middle Ages includes a line on the Dreyfus Case (with no indication of its significance in either the rise of anti-Semitism or its influence on Zionism) and the statement that Hitler murdered six million Jews. (Concerning this, we are told, reassuringly, that it "could not help stirring the consciences of many white Americans"—the word "white" is in reference to the discrimination against blacks in America. The hypothesis that the almost total annihilation of European Jewry did anything to the "consciences" of white Americans with regard to discrimination against blacks—are the two things supposed to be analogous, by the way? —is interesting; but certainly anyone familiar with the facts knows that few American "consciences" were particularly aroused by the Holocaust itself.)

An Arab writer, Charles Issawi, has presented a generally innocuous view of conditions in the Middle East since 1940—he simply ignores Israel, except to note that "thanks to the considerable, some would say lavish, foreign aid, the country has overcome the difficulties posed by *isolation from its Arab neighbors...*" (p. 1105; italics mine). If Israel has received "lavish" foreign aid, what adjective would describe the aid received by the Arab nations? And, of course, the "isolation" is certainly not of Israel's choosing. Similarly, the only problem Issawi sees resulting from the "Six-Day War" is that "no solution has been found for repatriating the 750,000 Arab refugees who fled Palestine (sic!) after the creation of Israel" (p. 1102).

The only reference of importance to Jews in modern times is the statement by Professor Albrecht-

Carrie that "ironically, in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Great Britain promised to create a national home for the Jews in the very heart of the Arab world" (p. 1049). The only thing "ironic" about the Balfour Declaration, obviously, was the failure of the British government to live up to its agreement and to fulfill the charges of the Palestine Mandate. (Not one word is said here either about the historical events that led to the settlement of Jews in Palestine, the notorious "White Paper," or the constant violation of agreements and infamous treatment of Jewish immigrants by the British.)

Of course, a one-volume "history of the world" is not a Jewish history. Proportionately, therefore, we should be very satisfied with the two excellent chapters on medieval Jewry by Gerson Cohen. However, the unfortunate aspects of the work are the inclusion of the childish remarks by Morton Smith (attempting to impress us with his "liberation" from religion?), totally out of place in an historical work, and the almost total disregard of the role played—in all its tragic as well as noble aspects—by Jews in modern world history. The assumption by Dr. Cohen, shared by so many writers, that for the majority of European Jews "the Middle Ages did not actually end until 1917" (p. 423) is unfortunate, precisely because it then permits us comfortably to forget the Jews again until we can calmly throw them in as a statistic—six million Jews were murdered "by Hitler" in a war which is already ancient history to the generation of students who will use the book.

If nothing else, such negligence should stimulate efforts in Jewish educational institutions and among Jewish scholars to produce students trained sufficiently in the techniques of historiography and in

the total field of Jewish history to be able to balance the picture.

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## A Political View

*A History of Zionism.* By WALTER LAQUEUR. Holt, Reinhart and Winston. New York, 1972. 640 pp. \$10.00.

*Reviewed by* DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

WALTER LAQUEUR is a *yored*. His vita indicates that he came to Palestine from Germany in 1938 and left for England after the Second World War. Forced to Palestine by Hitler, rather than drawn there by Zionism, Laqueur is sharply aware of the role of outside—that is, non-ideological—forces in the creation of the state.

Zionism had neither money, nor military power, nor even much political nuisance value. It could rely only on moral persuasion, not one of the most powerful levelers in political activity before 1918, and almost totally ineffective after (594).

Practical Zionism bought land, built collective settlements and Tel Aviv, established industry and Histadrut, the infrastructure of the modern state; but had it not been for the Holocaust and the tens of thousands of Jewish DP's whom no Allied government would admit, Bevin's intransigence (his adamant refusal to grant the 100,000 immigrant certificates suggested by President Truman), Arab intransigence (which precluded any compromise short of statehood) and the unique strategic opportunity offered to the Soviet Union to push the British out of the Middle East—Israel would not have come into being.

Laqueur is a cold-eyed political

analyst who recognizes clearly that the Zionists lacked the power to achieve a national home on their own. He punctures the happy myth broadcast at UJA meetings of an essential unity of the Jewish people behind the rebuilding of a national home. Not only were the Zionists, organizationally, a minority of a minority, but, until the Holocaust, most Jews gave no financial support to the *Yishuv*. Laqueur cites the arresting fact that in 1925 the Berlin Jewish community spent more on local social services than the Zionist Executive collected worldwide for land purchase and resettlement. The evidence is telling; the luggage vote by successive waves of Jewish emigrants who packed their bags for every other destination but Palestine; the closed pocketbooks of the wealthy who turned deaf ears to Zionist leaders, from Herzl to Weizmann. Lack of Jewish support, just as much as diplomatic weakness, inhibited not only the work, but the political demands of Zionists throughout the pre-World War II period. Jewish romantics will not like this book, but it will not be easy for them to argue against its central thesis.

Laqueur has written the political history of a nationalist movement rather than of Zionism. Though he occasionally mentions the religious and emotional dimensions of Zionism, he says explicitly that he has not written a history of ideas. More's the pity. What emerges is a truncated interpretation. Ahad Ha-am appears as a destructive critic whose "concept of Jewish ethics made him oppose political Zionism and power politics in general" (165). Rav Kook rates only a passing reference. Martin Buber is of interest as an effective Zionist propagandist among assimilated German youth, but the Rand Corporation mentality which is Laqueur's dismisses "the dark hints,

the mysterious phrases concerning subjects which above all needed precision and clarity" (168), as essentially irrelevant to Zionism. Laqueur has little understanding of what it means to be in the grip of a great vision. "Zionism is a response to anti-semitism" (196) pure and simple, never a desperate and perhaps illogical commitment to the broad gauged renewal of the Jewish people. "Jewish religion, Zion as a symbol, the nostalgia for the lost homeland and other mystical factors" (590) are listed as elements in the development of Zionism; listed and dismissed, listed and not comprehended. Laqueur understands A. D. Gordon as a Jewish variation of Tolstoy, enticed by a popular European consciousness which emphasized "men, nature, work." He does not understand what brought Gordon to Deganiah or kept him there. Predictably, he has little patience with religion. Orthodoxy is "Talmudic legalism" (54). The rabbinic citations in Kalisher's *Derishat Zion* are not understood as Torah, credentials of authenticity, but as "ritualistic invocations" (54). Liberal Judaism is little more than "the middle class and upper middle class Jewish establishment and their rabbis" (403). Gottheil and Felsenthal are listed, but not explained. Thumbnail interpretive sketches are provided of European Zionist leaders, great and not so great, but the rabbinic leaders of American Zionism (Wise, Silver . . .) are stick figures, fiery pulpiteers and impatient activists. No attempt is made to understand their religious-Zionist philosophy or their concepts of Zionist activity and strategy.

Laqueur, the successful and subtle analyst of many current European political issues, has written an incomplete book which tells us a good deal about Zionists' strat-

egy, but little about the Zionist soul. As one might expect, he insists "that it is debatable whether there is a history of Zionism beyond 1948" (XIII). In political terms, once there is a state, a nationalist movement ceases to have a *raison d'être*. He occasionally refers to, but patently does not involve himself with, the Zionist commitment to a revolution of Jewish attitudes and awareness (the transformation of the Jew from Bialik's cringing Maccabees of Kishinev into proud Jews of independent spirit), a Zionism for whom 1948 remains a way station, not an end.

This book is divided into three parts with a short conclusion, "Thirteen Theses On Zionism." Laqueur apparently sensed, and I believe correctly, that his chockful narrative somehow failed to illuminate his central theses about Zionism; to wit: Zionism was a response to the resurgence of European anti-Semitism as felt by Jews who had broken free of their parochial environment and who recognized in anti-Semitism a gathering and powerful force which would not simply dissipate with time and social progress. "Zionism is . . . a child of assimilation" (592). Zionism was "a psychological necessity for central European intellectuals, who realized that the emancipation of Jews triggered off a powerful reaction" (592). Zionists generally believed that emigration was the only feasible solution to the objective conditions of Eastern Europe and that the existence of a Jewish national home would shatter age-old stereotypes and create a new political reality for the Jews of Western Europe. He denies that pre-1948 Zionism was in any essential way committed to a total ingathering of the Diaspora and he remarks on the apparent paradox that the State came into

being after the Holocaust had destroyed the Eastern community for which it had been created.

The first section of this book gracefully reviews the well known history of Zionist beginnings until the Balfour Declaration. Part two consists of discursive essays on Arab nationalism, the left wing-Socialist Zionism, the Revisionists and various critics of Zionism. The most perspective essay is the first, in which Laqueur suggests that Arab and Jewish nationalism were always irreconcilable and that the prodigious attempts by Zionist leaders to find a formula, short of statehood, which would win Arab cooperation were doomed to failure. The issue can be judged only as a question of comparable rights. "The Jews had nowhere to go but Palestine. The Arabs could be absorbed if necessary in the neighboring centers" (268). Part three is a forced march from San Remo to Lake Success. This is potentially the most valuable section of this book, but, in fact, it is the least formed. Despite a piling up of detail, Laqueur has failed to shape the facts into meaning. He provides much interesting detail about parties, Congress debates, the various youth movements, the kibbutzim and their ideologies and intra-executive rivalries, but the material remains undigested. There is nowhere an investigation in depth of the growing restiveness of Ben Gurion or Silver with Weizmann's diplomacy. Nowhere does he ask whether a particular Zionist's program is to be taken at face value or whether men masked their thoughts for diplomatic reasons. We shuttle back and forth between Tel Aviv, Basle and London, but never do we see the Zionist movement as it was known from within.

Laqueur is particularly superficial in his treatment of the post-war years when power had shifted



to Palestine and New York. The quarrels between Wise and Silver and between Goldman and the American Zionist Emergency Council are treated as personality disputes rather than as fundamental strategic questions dealing with the integrity of the Biltmore Platform and the nature of Jewish political activity in the U.S.: should Jews trust the good intentions of a Democratic president for whom there was much sympathy or exert as much political pressure as they could? There is no discussion of the conflicting political ideologies which were somehow molded into the embryonic Palestinean shadow government or of the vacillation of men like Sharett about statehood.

This is a full, but not an insightful, book. This reader learned much about Zionist youth movements, the emergence of the Hagana out of Kibbutz Meuhad and appreciated the analysis of the anti-Zionist criticism of Kautsky and other critics of the Left. Laqueur is fascinated by, and fascinating on, the relationship between Zionist youth movements and the *Wandervogel*; between Pinsker's thought and that of the *Risorgimento*; between Revisionist thinking and that of Spanish and Italian Fascism, *l'havdil*. But the specialness of Zionism has not been located and it cannot be located by any purely political analysis.

The book is designedly objective

but peculiarly personal. "Assimilation is bound to take its course in the years to come with or without the benefit of ideological justification" (407). It is wrong to say that "assimilation is a weakness of character" (591). "Many are no longer religious and the Jewish tradition is largely meaningless to them. The new assimilationists are not conscious traitors to their people, nor are their personalities warped or permeated with self-hate. The tie is loosened; they have grown away from Jewish tradition and become indifferent to it. A catastrophe would be needed to stop this process" (592). I cite this apologia, not as an *ad hominem* putdown—Laqueur may be right—but because it suggests the perspective of the writer, a man who has lived in Israel and obviously still feels a great sympathy for the State, but who is, and remains, a man of the West. Spiritually, Laqueur walks in the pride of his central European upbringing. Israel is an interesting problem in world politics and a vibrant place; but the creative survival of the Jewish people is another question and not one of significant interest to this author. The full history of Zionism waits to be written.

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